

A  
PARSON'S LOG

By  
GEORGE JACKSON, D.D.

462

"G. J.",

For nearly thirty years these initials have regularly appeared at the foot of this column, which has been read with pleasure and profit, instruction and stimulus, by thousands of readers of the "Manchester Guardian" the world over. The weight of years and failing sight make it imperative that the amount of "G. J.'s" writing be curtailed. Hence, to the regret of all, this column must carry other initials. It would not be fitting that it should do so without some appreciation of all that Dr. George Jackson has done in and through it. For, of course, the initials have disguised from nobody the fact that the general benefactor was a distinguished figure in the Methodist Church—known by his preaching and his books.

But, devoted to his own denomination, he has friends in all and has a keen appreciation of the things for which they stand. Methodism is sometimes charged with being "clique-y" (I am sure Dr. Jackson would never have perpetrated a word like that, even if there be one), and maybe it is a long time since a non-Methodist preached at Wesley's Chapel—even though the Central Halls invite preachers from far and wide,—but no one has ever applied such a word to the tolerant and open-minded "G. J."

No doubt this tolerance is due in part to the width of Dr. Jackson's experience—in Scotland and Canada as well as in many parts of England he has seen life in the

Memories of Stevenson in Samoa were stirred this week-end for an

### Another "R. L. S." Link

only improvement in public behaviour that has been noted is the removal on the Southern Railway of rather fewer of their lamp-shades.

ammunition ran low. If Hitler had not had Russia on his hands he would probably have tried to take Malta by airborne or amphibious assault, for he must have been outraged by the value of the island to us. No outpost ever served us better.





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BY

GEORGE JACKSON

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TO  
S. DAVID COATES,  
MY FRIEND OF FORTY YEARS.

'What do we live for if it is not to make life less  
difficult to each other?'

GEORGE ELIOT.





## PREFACE

ALL that needs to be said by way of preface to this little volume is that, like its predecessor, *Reasonable Religion* (James Clarke and Co., 1922), it consists of a selection from scores of similar papers written during the last ten years for the columns of the *Manchester Guardian*. I wish to take this opportunity gratefully to acknowledge my indebtedness to the editor for the large freedom granted me in the choice and treatment of my subjects, and for his courtesy in permitting this reprint.

Those who read the papers in this form will not forget the limitations which the circumstances of their origin necessarily impose upon them, and will not complain if brevity and balance are not always to be found together.

G.J.

Didsbury College,  
Manchester, 1927.



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# A PARSON'S LOG

## AN APOLOGY FOR THE JOURNALISTIC MIND

READING the other day in a well-known religious newspaper a review of a recent book, my attention was caught by a reference to 'people of a journalistic habit of mind' and their attitude to theological discussions. Nobody was named, but it was quite evident from a phrase which he quoted that the reviewer had in mind the present writer. As he did not mention my name I need not mention his, and the brief discussion can the more easily be kept quite impersonal. I will only transgress so far as to say that as the reviewer is himself an old religious journalist and was, as I have said, writing in a religious newspaper his rather slighting reference to 'the journalistic habit of mind' seems a little out of place. It might, of course, be said that he was a journalist without 'the journalistic habit of mind,' in which case one can only reply—so much the less journalist he! For the rest it is enough to say that the reviewer is a scholarly theologian, held in high repute, not only in his own communion but throughout the Christian churches of our land.

But now, what is this 'journalistic mind' which is apparently so incapable of doing justice to the



sacred interests of theology? Our reviewer does not himself tell us; but the phrase on his lips is not, perhaps, very difficult of interpretation. He means, probably, what has been called 'the five-minute mind': the mind, that is to say, which is quick to seize one or two aspects of a great problem, and to state them in striking and effective form. That is its strength. Its weakness is that it does not see the problem as a whole, and, in particular, that it ignores those aspects of it that do not lend themselves to swift and telling treatment. It has no sense, or at least no adequate sense, of the gravity of the great themes on which sometimes it lays so light and wanton a finger. In a word, it is showy, confident, dexterous; but it is half-informed, disproportionate, superficial.

Well, this is a pretty formidable indictment, and for the moment I am content to let judgement go by default. None the less, I am prepared to maintain the rights of the journalist even in the high matters of theology. And by this I mean, not that he has a right to speak of things of which he knows nothing—the only right of ignorance is to be instructed, and meanwhile to hold its tongue—but the right to speak in his own way on subjects with which he has taken adequate pains to acquaint himself. We all know the tendency in professional quarters to look down with cold scorn on the efforts of the 'amateur' who has not had the professional's training and does not speak his dialect. It was so with the rabbis of Palestine in the days of Jesus: 'How knoweth this man letters?' they said, 'having never learned?'

And the modern professors of theology sometimes reveal the same bias. But religion is the last subject that can be relinquished to the specialists. Nothing is essential to Christianity that cannot be made plain to plain people, and simple folk have a right to hear its truths expounded in the only language that they can understand. If I may speak for myself, I do not take the least interest in a theology which cannot be preached. I do not mean that it has no other and quite legitimate interest, but only that it has none for me. And when I write on religious subjects I do so with the same purpose as when I speak—that I may be as completely and as immediately understood as possible, which is, I suppose, always one of the aims of the journalistically-minded. At any rate I do most earnestly protest against the notion that unless a man is able to write in the manner of a grave theological treatise, or a Bible Dictionary article, he ought not to touch on the high themes of theology at all.

Before I leave the subject may I suggest to those who are inclined to agree with our reviewer that there is a habit of mind, not wholly unknown among theologians, which is much more hurtful to the interests of the Church and religion than that of the journalist, and which has been described once for all by one who was an equal master in the English language and the subtleties of the human mind. 'In the present day,' writes Newman, 'mistiness is the mother of wisdom. A man who can set down half a dozen general propositions, which escape

from destroying one another only by being diluted into truisms, who can hold the balance between opposites so skilfully as to do without fulcrum or beam, who never announces a truth without guarding himself against being supposed to exclude the contradictory—this is your safe man and the hope of the Church : this is what the Church is said to want, not party men, but sensible, temperate, sober, well-judging persons, to guide it through the channel of no meaning, between the Scylla and Charybdis of Aye and No.'

I am not convinced that the Church has anything really to hear from ' people of a journalistic habit of mind,' but I sometimes wonder what is the influence of those who have bartered the precious gifts of frankness and simplicity for the doubtful arts of the diplomatist, and have learned to say ' No ' in such ambiguous fashion that many of their hearers are left with the impression that they were really trying to say ' Yes.'

I

THE STUDY





## I

### THE PLAGUE OF 'BUSY-NESS'

I REMEMBER speaking some years ago with a ministerial friend—a man of equal kindliness and shrewdness—who told me of the disappointment with which, during a few weeks' holiday, he had listened to a number of preachers. Their sermons, he said, were tame and ineffective ; there was nothing in them either to kindle or to arrest. 'What's the matter?' I asked. 'Is it the vulgar vice of laziness?' 'No,' he replied ; 'it's the more vulgar vice of busy-ness.' And his, I am convinced now, was much the truer diagnosis. There are, I suppose, lazy men in the ministry, as in every other walk of life ; but, speaking broadly, laziness is not now the minister's besetting sin. For one thing, he is protected against it, if by nothing else, by the quickness with which, under modern conditions, his sin finds the sinner out and puts him to an open shame. We all remember the 'Northern Farmer's' contrast between the village parson and himself—' 'E reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a stubb'd Thurnaby waäste '—but the old gibes have lost their point to-day, and though, doubtless, there are exceptions, yet on the whole the clergy of all denominations are now as hard-working a set of men as is to be found in the community.

No; the snare of the minister to-day is not idleness, it is 'busy-ness.' During the last generation life in the Church, as in the world, has grown infinitely more complex. It has thrown out new developments on every side, many of them at least of a most useful and beneficent kind, but all of them involving fresh demands on the time of the minister. The very drawing together of the Churches, in which all good men must rejoice, means for many—often already the most overtaxed—yet further calls of a kind they find it hard to refuse. Our deepened concern for the manifold problems of social reform works the same way. This is a sufficiently formidable list, but a ministerial correspondent—for whose words I take no responsibility—would make yet another addition. 'In a sense,' he says, 'most congregations are grateful for good preaching. Yet in practice they frequently discourage it; the minister who spends his evenings playing bridge is regarded as a man very much alive to the need of the time!'

And what is the result of all this—I leave the bridge parties out of the account—on the work with which the preacher of the Word is mainly concerned? Why just this, that the voice of prophecy, which the Free Churches exist to make audible and commanding, is in danger of being smothered and silenced. We cannot have it both ways, and if, as Dr. Forsyth used to put it in his epigrammatic way, there is bustle all the week there will be baldness all the Sunday. Sometimes when we Free Churchmen are in the mood for criticizing some of our Anglican

neighbours we say that they have suffered the prophet to be superseded by the priest ; but is it any better to let him be eclipsed by the ecclesiastical man of affairs ? I do not want to seem to be setting off one man's work against another's. In the highly organized Church life of to-day there is scope for all kinds of gifts—for the pastor, and for the ecclesiastic, the man with the oil-can who helps to keep the big and cumbrous machinery running smoothly, as well as for the preacher. Nevertheless, if the Free Churches are to be kept alive and strong, it is the preachers who must do it, and it sometimes looks as if by setting them to do so many things that are desirable we are making impossible the doing of the one thing which is necessary.

What is to be done ? In part the remedy lies in the minister's own hands. Let him give his people to understand that, not for any selfish ends but for their own sakes, that he may do for them the work which both they and he believe that he is called to do, the best hours of each day must be kept free from interruption. There are urgent calls, of course, to which everything will give way, and at a moment's notice. But it is not of these that I am thinking, but of those unnecessary and sometimes frivolous demands which eat into a man's day and make null and void his best hopes and plans. Might not ministers be a little more resolute than they sometimes are to take their life into their own hands and lay it out as they alone best know how ? When I was in Edinburgh—I hope I may be forgiven the personal reference—I told my people quite frankly

that I could attend no meetings of any kind on Saturday ; that I wished on that day, as far as possible, to be left severely alone, since unless I refused to see them on Saturday they would soon refuse to see me on Sunday. They understood my motive and they respected my wishes.

And cannot the laymen of the Church do something for the protection of the minister in this matter ? Is it really necessary that he should be in at everything ? When there is a new organist to be appointed, or a ' sale of work ' to be got up, or the annual outing of the mothers' meeting to be arranged for, must it be that this poor man should always be the chairman of the committee ? I often wonder, too, if laymen have any idea of the immense burden of clerical work—much of it of the most trivial character, yet all needing to be done by somebody—which often falls to the minister's lot. I could give the names of dozens of men whose powers are at their best, and whose experience ought to be of priceless value to their church, who are doomed to spend weary hours every week doing work which could be bought at a shilling an hour. Not a single business-house in the kingdom would tolerate such a waste of time by its heads of departments for a single hour. It would be good if, in every place where ministers and laymen are wont to meet together, two New Testament texts could be written up in letters of gold :

' Called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.'

' It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God and serve tables.'

## II

### HOW TO READ THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE last generation has witnessed a very remarkable advance in the study of the Old Testament in this country. Over the whole of the wide field a great army of investigators has been diligently at work, accumulating facts, sorting and interpreting them, with results that are now accessible in an ever-increasing mass of commentaries and handbooks of every kind. There are, of course, still endless differences of opinion on points of detail, but the main conclusions of modern Old Testament study have now passed beyond the realm of controversy ; they are assumed and expounded in almost all the colleges where young men are being trained for the work of the Christian ministry ; and it is as unthinkable that we should revert to earlier methods of Biblical interpretation as that modern science should revert to pre-Copernican ways of thinking about the universe. But this new knowledge which is in the hands of the teachers of the Church, and which has deepened incalculably their own sense of the significance and value of the Old Testament, has not yet come into the possession of the Church as a whole. To what extent—to take one pretty obvious example—is it influencing the weekly instruction in our Sunday Schools ? Am I exaggerating if I say that the average minister in our churches reads one Old Testament and the average teacher in our Sunday Schools another and very different one ?



Of course, one must not be impatient ; new truth has often had to win its way slowly, and never more slowly than when it has seemed in conflict with the conservatism of the religious instinct. And yet anyone who stops to think cannot but realize how unsatisfactory, and even how perilous, the present situation is. It is therefore with sincere delight that I welcome a book like the Rev. Frederick J. Rae's *How to Teach the Old Testament*. Mr. Rae is the director of religious instruction in the Aberdeen Provincial Training Centre, and his book is intended to do just that mediating kind of service which the hour so urgently calls for. It consists of sixty-three sections, most of them dealing with the historical narratives of the Old Testament—in other words, with those portions of the book where the problems both of the teacher and the pupil are most thickly strewn. Mr. Rae writes with reverence and with frankness, with knowledge and with sympathy, and the use of his book by those who are responsible for the religious education of the young, whether in Sunday school, day school, or home, would do much to promote saner methods of Biblical interpretation.

Mr. Rae very properly lays great emphasis on the progressive character of Old Testament revelation, since it is in forgetfulness of that that most of our misunderstandings take their rise. The ordinary Bible-reader gives to it a sleepy assent as a general principle, but unfortunately omits to apply it when he is reading Old Testament narratives which belong to the primitive and cruder stages of revelation. When, for example, he reads in the First Book of

Samuel that the Lord 'smote the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord,' instead of saying frankly, 'No, that is only the writer's interpretation of what happened; what really happened was that the Beth-shemites died from the plague which the ark and its attendants carried with them,' he sets himself the impossible task of seeking to explain and justify the alleged Divine act. Lord Morley tells a story of a sharp conflict, in the days of Cromwell, between a stiff and unyielding Presbyterian and an equally stiff and unyielding Independent. One of the two died a few days later of an ague. 'It is not good to stand in Christ's way,' was the dour comment of his opponent; he believed without doubt that he had been relieved of a perverse and wicked adversary by a Divine visitation. We accept the fact of the man's death, but we have our own opinion about his opponent's interpretation of it; and the same kind of discrimination must be exercised when we are reading these ancient records of primitive Hebrew religion.

But if, on the one hand, there are readers of the Old Testament who err because they will not recognize the presence in it of these lower strata, there are others equally at fault because they can see nothing else. For example, in a recent little book by an Oxford scholar on Ancient Greece the writer, after speaking of the gods of that land, goes on to say, 'How different from the Israelites who prostrated themselves in awe before a remote and relentless Jehovah!' But what folly and what

injustice it is to characterize the literature of a thousand years in that summary fashion ! Granted that there is much in it in which the Deity is conceived as 'a remote and relentless Jehovah,' does anyone seriously suggest that the religious teaching of the great Hebrew prophets and psalmists is to be dismissed in a phrase like that ? Take from a hundred possible examples this tender, beautiful word from Isaiah : 'As birds flying—as little mother-birds hovering—so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem ; He will protect and deliver it, He will pass over and preserve it' ; or this passionate, lyric cry from the heart of some unknown psalmist :

Whom have I in Heaven but Thee ?

And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.

'A remote and relentless Jehovah' indeed ! As I have said, Hebrew religion was not always at that height, and Christian readers often go astray in not recognizing the fact ; but what shall we say of an Oxford don, who would be ashamed to be caught tripping where Æschylus and Euripides are concerned, but who yet reveals so strange an ignorance of the glories of a literature which is to-day almost as much English as it is Hebrew ?

### III

#### FAITH AND CRITICISM

CHRISTIAN laymen who desire to understand what is meant by Biblical criticism, and Christian ministers who desire an object-lesson in the tactful

presentation of new truth to their congregations, should both alike read Professor Peake's book, *The Nature of Scripture*. Those who are already familiar with the Professor's previous works will find little or nothing in this that is new to them. The volume is none the less a useful and welcome addition to the literature of the great subject with which it deals. For one thing, the whole Church is so sadly in arrears with the work of mediating to the rank and file of its membership the results of modern Christian scholarship that we can hardly have too many books of this kind, provided always that they are written with knowledge and sympathy. And Dr. Peake has both. His equipment as a scholar is beyond question ; he writes with lucidity and grace ; above all, his temper, though fearless and frank, is always conciliatory and reverent. Moreover, the very brevity of this volume will commend it to many who desire to be taught the guiding principles of Biblical criticism but have no time for the study of its details.

Dr. Peake is very patient to explain once more what criticism means. It is not the name for a set of results, whether negative or positive ; it is a method of study. It has nothing to do with philosophical presuppositions which rule out the miraculous in advance. It seeks only to interpret the actual phenomena of Scripture—phenomena which the traditional view is powerless to explain. When we ask what are the results of the application of this method to our Old Testament Scriptures (and it is the Old Testament with which Dr. Peake's

book is mainly concerned) the answer is twofold. On the one hand it means the definite and final abandonment of what has already been called the 'traditional view.' In other words, we know now that many of the books of the Old Testament were not written by the men whose names they bear; that myth and legend have their place in the sacred story; that some books—such as Daniel and Esther—are to be read rather as works of fiction than of history; that many of the things attributed to God, especially in the earlier literature, reveal rather the ignorance of man than the truth of God, and so on. Scholars do, of course, often differ among themselves concerning this or that point of detail, and their opponents have not been slow to make the most of their differences; but these, it should be clearly understood, do nothing to make more tenable the abandoned positions of the past.

But I should be doing a gross injustice to Dr. Peake and to the cause which he so skilfully champions if I were to suggest that the results of criticism are mainly negative. On the contrary, the losses, which are more fanciful than real, are completely outweighed by the solid and substantial gains. For example, criticism by its rearrangement and re-reading of the Biblical literature has for the first time put us at the point of view from which we can rightly estimate and appreciate the revelation of which it is the record.

The value of the Old Testament (says Dr. Peake) consists in this, that it is the record of an exceptional movement of the Divine Spirit upon a chosen and a guided people, taking



them at a low level and gradually leading them to a higher and higher level, until it became possible for them to receive the supreme revelation of God's Only Begotten Son. Now, when we see this, we do not any longer come to the Old Testament with illegitimate demands upon it; we do not ask that the Old Testament shall give us all that we find in the New; we ask that it shall show us the ordered progression which shall move on and up to that supreme revelation. And when we look at things in this way we realize that the Old Testament has become of the greatest possible value to us. It shows us the process of slow education given by God to a people which from the very circumstances of its origin and environment had to be taken at a stage little removed from heathenism.

To some all this may seem so obvious and commonplace as hardly to need saying. But Dr. Peake is right in saying it yet again, for its manifold implications are still very imperfectly grasped by the average Bible reader. Once it is fully understood the miserable things that have been the chief stock-in-trade of generations of Secularist lecturers in Hyde Park, and are still a real stumbling-block to multitudes of young men and women, trouble us no more. Not only so, but, as Dr. Peake points out again and again, without these sometimes unsavoury things in the record of Old Testament revelation the glory of the New would never fully appear. We can measure the heights only when we see the depths from which they spring. And therefore they wholly misunderstand the critic's purpose who imagine that he is anxious to get rid of some parts of the Old Testament as uninspired and valueless. He does not want to get rid of any; he wants the whole, not because every part is of worth if separated from the rest, but because only in the whole can we trace

the great, age-long process which had its culmination in Jesus Christ.

By an interesting coincidence Dr. Peake's book came to me in the same parcel with a volume of Spurgeon's sermons. 'Which things are an allegory.' There are, I know, loud and confident voices telling us that faith and criticism cannot live together, that one or the other must go. If they are right we might indeed despair of the Church's future. Dr. Peake speaks of himself in the preface to his book as 'a student who combines an acceptance of critical method with a loyal adhesion to the evangelical faith.' It is a double loyalty we must all seek to learn, for the Church can never fulfil its whole duty to this generation until the scholar and the evangelist are hailed as true yoke-fellows in the service of the one Lord.

#### IV

#### OLD TESTAMENT 'FICTION'

IN the foregoing paper it was said that some books of the Old Testament, such as Daniel and Esther, 'are to be read rather as works of fiction than of history.' To many of my readers—I should have thought to most of them—this is nothing more than a very obvious and familiar commonplace; but there are some apparently to whom it is a strange and disturbing idea, and for their sakes I should like to add an explanatory and, I hope, reassuring word.

I say, then, that in the judgement of most modern Biblical scholars the book of Esther and the narrative portions of the books of Daniel (chapters i-vi) belong to the category of historical romance rather than to history proper. That such, right or wrong—and with the accuracy of the opinion I am not at the moment concerned—is the judgement of most Old Testament students to-day could very quickly be shown if this were the place to do it. But I must content myself with a single quotation which I take advisedly, not from a 'professional' higher critic, but from one of our most honoured evangelical preachers and pastors, Dr. R. F. Horton, of Hampstead. The book of Esther, says Dr. Horton, 'is a story written in precisely the same way as Mrs. Charles's *Schönberg-Cotta Family*, or Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket*, based in a general sense upon historical situations, but aiming to teach some religious lesson by the tale. If the modern reader hesitates to admit fiction as a means of Divine teaching, and feels that the Bible is degraded by containing a piece of such literature in its collection, then he has no alternative but to follow Luther, and exclude the book from the Canon—a course which most of us would be very reluctant to take.'

Again I must pass over in silence the reasons which have led to this now generally accepted conclusion. My sole concern at this moment is to point out that, supposing it to be correct, there is nothing in it that need cause anyone the least uneasiness. The Old Testament, let us remember, is not simply a book : it is a literature, a literature which is representative

of the life of an ancient people through a thousand years of its history. It is, moreover, a literature which makes use of almost all the varieties of literary form which are known to us. Thus we have law in the Pentateuch, history in Samuel and Kings, prophecy in Isaiah and Amos, poetry, dramatic in Job, lyrical and didactic in the Psalms, and 'the sayings of the wise' in Proverbs. In view of all this need anyone be surprised, still less need anyone be perturbed, if he is told that among the many varieties of Hebrew literature fiction also has its place? It would be strange indeed if a generation which takes nine-tenths of its reading in the form of fiction should find any difficulty in believing that ancient Israel may have had its story-tellers as well as modern England.

But, apparently, there are some who are very loth to associate fiction with the Bible; it seems somehow—to borrow Dr. Horton's word—to 'degrade' the Holy Book. Tell them that the first six chapters of the Book of Daniel are not history but a tale, and they will immediately cry out, 'Then is the story not true?' But what do you mean by 'true'? Are the opening chapters of Genesis true? If by 'true' we mean historically, scientifically true, the answer is they are certainly not, and no educated man to-day dreams of going to them for either science or history. But truth there is in them, moral and religious truth, which can never become obsolete while man has a heart and a conscience to respond to it. Perhaps it is not too much to say that if a man cannot hear the voice of God in the stories of

the Creation and the Fall he will not hear God anywhere in the Old Testament. Is the book of Jonah true? We all know how the question used to be answered, and with what results. Now that we have given it up as history it has ceased to be a riddle, and has become instead one of the most moving parables of the Divine compassion that even the Bible itself contains. Is the *Pilgrim's Progress* true? Again we ask, what does the question mean? If it means, did there once live a man whose name was Christian, who dwelt in the City of Destruction, and fell into the Slough of Despond, and fought with Apollyon in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, all of which places you may find on a map, then, of course, the *Pilgrim's Progress* is not true; but as a symbol of the soul's experience in its quest for light and peace, it is true, eternally true. Are the parables of Jesus true? Go to Palestine and your dragoman, I believe, will show you the house where the Good Samaritan lived! But does anyone for a moment suppose that the worth of the parable for us to-day depends in any wise upon whether there once lived some man of Samaria who did the things of which our Lord speaks? And as we interpret Christ's parables and Bunyan's allegory, so we must learn to interpret some portions of our Old Testament Scriptures which in the past we have misread as history. Truth in the sense of literal historical fact they do not contain; but religious truth, truth concerning both God and man, there is in them for us all, and it is 'truth embodied in a tale.' It was, the New Testament tells us, 'in

divers manners ' that God spake unto the fathers ; and when we remember how large is the place which the art of the story-teller has filled and still fills in human life, are we attributing anything unworthy to God when we say that He who used the song of the poet and the sermon of the prophet and the record of the historian has also used this in order the better to declare His truth to men ?

## V

## FACT AND FICTION IN THE BIBLE

MY last paper on Old Testament ' Fiction '—has brought me letters in which approval, disapproval, and doubt all find expression. Some of the questions raised are hardly suitable for discussion here, but one of my correspondents represents so admirably a class of readers whom I would fain serve if I can, and suggests two or three points of such large and general interest, that I make no apology for returning to the subject. I said in my last paper, it may be remembered, that there is nothing really disconcerting in the view which is now very widely held that some portions of the Old Testament, such as Daniel and Esther, are to be read rather as works of fiction than of history. In reply to this my correspondent raises three difficulties with which I propose very briefly to deal.

If, he says, these books had been regarded by the Jews themselves as fiction they would not have



found a place within the sacred Canon. This is probably true, but if it proves anything it proves too much. It is well-known that two of the latest books of the Old Testament to secure canonical recognition were the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, and it is doubtful if they would have secured it at all had it not been for the belief that Solomon was their author. But nobody contends for the Solomonic authorship of either of these books to-day. The truth is that the makers of the Canon builded better than they knew. As Dr. Skinner says, 'For the great mass of the Old Testament Scriptures the real sanction lies in the witness borne to their inspiration by the experience of devout minds in Israel,' and, we may add, by subsequent Christian experience. But the judgements of the Jewish scribes were often sounder than the reasons by which they sought to defend them, and when we come to matters like the date, authorship, and literary character of individual books of the Old Testament, Jewish opinion must be taken for just what it happens to be worth. And in some instances as the above examples show, it is worth nothing at all. So that the admission of Esther into the Canon no more settles the question of its historicity than does the admission of Ecclesiastes the question of its authorship.

A further difficulty which my correspondent feels is that when we are dealing with the narratives of the Bible, to deny their historicity seems to him to deprive them of their 'whole value.' But why should not narratives which are not strictly historical

be made the vehicle of divine truth equally with those that are? In point of fact, many such narratives have been so used. The Bible story of the Flood, for example, belongs to the world of Hebrew legend rather than of history. There may, indeed, be in it some echo of an ancient and terrible local cataclysm; but the narrative as it stands is plainly unhistorical. Is it, therefore, without value? Does not the truth about sin and God's judgement upon it still remain in all its impressive simplicity whatever we think of the old-world tradition in which it is embodied? The book of Jonah, again, is in narrative form, but I can hardly think that my correspondent will want to press his 'historical or worthless' formula here. Indeed, in this case it was not until our interpreters had ceased to treat the book as history that their eyes were opened to its profound spiritual significance. It should not be forgotten, too, that legend has its value even from the historian's point of view. The story of the dead man who revived and stood upon his feet as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha is, perhaps, as pure a bit of legend as can be found anywhere in Scripture, yet it helps us to realize as vividly as history itself could do the kind of impression that Elisha had made on the popular mind. What must the man himself have been concerning whom stories like this were told and believed?

But, it is urged again—and here we come to the crux of the whole difficulty—once you admit legend or story in any part of the Bible you 'detract from the historicity of the whole book.' And, continues

my correspondent, 'were Jesus proved to be an unhistorical figure the Christian religion would, I think, fall to the ground.' And so think I. But about this, fortunately, there is no need to grow uneasy. The opinion put forward of recent years by a tiny group of scholars that no such figure as the historical Jesus ever existed is sheer midsummer madness, and has already been laughed out of court by all sober and competent judges. For my own part I agree heartily with both halves of the well-considered judgement of Bishop Gore. 'I have always contended,' he says, 'that we are entitled to recognize that myth and legend and story have been instruments in the divine education of man, as well as strict history. Where the element of fact becomes of supreme significance, in the region of the Incarnation, there also the historical evidence is adequate and, to my mind, convincing.' But will those who argue like my friendly critic ask themselves this: Which is the more likely to endanger the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels—the attempt to prove the exact and equal historical truth of every part of Scripture or the attempt to discriminate, each part being left to the evidence which properly belongs to it? The latter is a task well within our reach, but only when we have frankly and unconditionally abandoned the former. 'It is a responsibility,' says Canon Driver, 'which, if they realized it, few would surely take upon themselves, to weight Christianity with a view of the Old Testament which has no authority or support either in the Bible itself or in the formularies of the Church,

which will not bear examination, but, on the contrary when confronted with the facts, is at once seen to be refuted by them.'

If anyone asks how and why we are to discriminate between, say, the gospel of St. Mark and the book of Esther, an illustration may suggest how the question may be answered. The story of the terrible massacre by Indians of the garrison at Fort William Henry, during the long struggle between England and France in North America, has been told by Francis Parkman in his *Montcalm and Wolfe*, and by Fenimore Cooper in his *Last of the Mohicans*. The former we call a history, the latter a novel. Why? There is nothing on the title-page of either book to warrant us in making such a distinction. We make it, confidently and correctly, because in each case the character of the contents reveals the class of literature to which each belongs. And in the same self-evidencing way—the evidence may be read in any good modern commentary—the book of Esther reveals how it is to be classified. Its author is not a recorder, he is a romancer; he is not writing history, he is telling a tale.

## VI

### 'WHAT HAVE THE CRITICS LEFT US?'

IN one of Thomas Hardy's poems, 'The Respectable Burgher on "The Higher Criticism,"' the burgher, after summing up what he supposes to be the teaching

of ‘reverend doctors’ to-day concerning the Bible, concludes by saying :

Since thus they hint, nor turn a hair,  
All churchgoing will I forswear,  
And sit on Sundays in my chair,  
And read that moderate man Voltaire.

And, apparently, if I am to judge by communications which are continually reaching me, there must be a good many who, if they do not follow the respectable burgher’s example, think nevertheless that there is a good deal to be said for his point of view. Of course they are wholly mistaken. The Higher Criticism which they so persistently misunderstand is proving itself to an increasing number every day the Bible student’s best friend by providing him with the only intelligent and reasonable explanation of the Biblical facts. If the layman, whose duties often leave him but little time for studies of this kind, does not always realize how this can be, he may readily be excused. But what is to be said of ministers of religion who know so little of what they are set to teach that they can still represent modern Christian scholars—such, let us say, as the contributors to Hastings’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, or Peake’s *Commentary*—as ruthless destroyers who, if they had their way, would leave us with a Bible no better than a heap of tatters, discredited and worthless?

I have been led to ask this question through reading a book entitled *Where the Higher Criticism Fails*, written by Dr. W. H. Fitchett, and published by the Epworth Press, the publishing house of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. As a contribution to

the subject with which it deals it is of little value, and I should not have referred to it here at all had it not been for the distinction of the author, and the fear lest anyone should imagine that it is in any sense representative of Wesleyan Methodist opinion. Dr. Fitchett is a minister of the Methodist Church of Australia, and a well-known writer on historical and other subjects. Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey tells us in his recent autobiography that when he was editor of the *Cornhill*, Dr. Fitchett was one of the 'finds' of which he is to-day—most justly—proud. His *Life of Wesley* I always recommend as perhaps the best for the general reader who desires to have before him a vivid portrait of the great Methodist leader. His Fernley Lecture, too—*The Unrealized Logic of Religion*—is an admirable bit of popular and effective apologetics. It is with the more regret, therefore, that I have read his latest book; it can do nothing but confuse and mislead. For one thing, nobody can say—it is doubtful if Dr. Fitchett himself could—exactly where he stands. On one page things are said which will be hailed with shouts of glee in all the camps of obscurantism, while on the next admissions are made which, if they mean anything at all, should carry the author over, bag and baggage, to the other side. Dr. Fitchett's use of 'authorities' is simply bewildering. He quotes writers like Glover and Denney and Gore in a way that would suggest to those who do not know better that they are all on his side whenever he makes war on the critics. But if he does agree with them—and they have not



failed to make their position plain enough—this book need not have been written; except for the extremists of both wings the debate is at an end.

I have only space for one example of Dr. Fitchett's general unfairness and inaccuracy. ‘The Book of Jonah,’ he says, ‘if we read it through the spectacles of the Higher Critics, is made incredible and turned into a mere folk-story of a low type by the incident of Jonah and the whale.’ He further speaks of it as one of three books ‘which some critics would thrust out of the Bible on the ground of their irrelevance’. When a man allows himself to write like that it is difficult to answer him reasonably. Has Dr. Fitchett never read what has been written about the Book of Jonah by critics like Cornill, of Germany, and by our own George Adam Smith? Does he not know that if there is one book in the Bible which, so far from seeking to thrust it out, the critics have united to praise and magnify—almost to overpraise—it is the Book of Jonah?

It so happens that, almost simultaneously with Dr. Fitchett's, two other books appeared from the pen of Dr. J. E. McFadyen—*The Interest of the Bible* and *The Use of the Old Testament in the Light of Modern Knowledge*. Dr. McFadyen is the Old Testament professor in the United Free Church College, Glasgow, where he succeeded Sir George Adam Smith. In common with practically all his fellow-teachers in our theological colleges to-day, he accepts and expounds the principles of Biblical interpretation which Dr. Fitchett so vehemently

assails. But if anyone wishes to see how those principles can be made to serve the best interests of the ordinary Bible student he should read one or both of these volumes. They are written in a reverent spirit, in lucid and non-technical language, and with an unfailing sense of the moral and spiritual values which are enshrined within the ancient records of our faith. 'Half in sorrow, half in anger,' says Dr. McFadyen—it is the only quotation for which I can find room—the question is often asked, "What have the critics left us?" and the answer is "Everything." Criticism would not if it could, and could not if it would, argue the material out of existence; its aim is to help us to understand that material, and, above all, the religious purpose which shapes and controls it. In this way that old literature comes back into our modern world with all the charm and aroma of its ancient setting, and finds a place in our minds as well as in our hearts.'

## VII

### EGYPT AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

DURING recent days the eyes of men everywhere have been drawn, as never before, to that ancient and mysterious civilization which for nearly three thousand years had its home in the valley of the Nile. There should be no lack of readers, therefore, for Mr. T. Eric Peet's book, *Egypt and the Old*

*Testament.* Mr. Peet is Professor of Egyptology in Liverpool University, and the aim of his handsome and well-written volume is 'to put into words free, as far as possible, from the technicalities of the excavator and the philologist the bearing of the latest finds in Egypt on the narrative of the Old Testament.' Mr. Peet has a wide field to cover. He begins his story with the Hebrew account of Abraham's descent into Egypt, and he closes it in the time of the Maccabees—a period in all of something like two thousand years. He has something to say about the various occasions on which history brings Palestine and Egypt into contact with each other—the days of Solomon and Rehoboam, of Isaiah and Jeremiah—but it is naturally to the story of the Exodus that he gives most attention, and it is his conclusions regarding it which will be of most interest to the general Biblical reader.

Some years ago, writing on 'The Miracles of the Old Testament,'<sup>1</sup> I pointed out that, though there is amply sufficient reason for maintaining our belief in the story of the Exodus, as of Old Testament history generally, it is impossible to feel the same certainty about many of the marvels with which the story has been embellished; and this hesitation is based, not on any theories of the universe which would rule out the miraculous in advance, but simply on the want of evidence. If we are to accept the judgement of those who know—and, at least, it is safer to do that than to listen to the prejudices of those who don't—our earliest written accounts of

<sup>1</sup> See my *Reasonable Religion*, p. 83.

the Exodus are three or four centuries later than the events which they describe ; in other words, they are divided from it by a gulf of years as wide as that which separates us from the Spanish Armada. While, therefore, we need no more doubt Israel's deliverance from Egypt than we doubt Elizabeth's victory over Philip of Spain—what nation would be likely to invent a story of its own servitude in a foreign land ?—we cannot help doubting many of the details of the narrative, and that not through any fault of ours, but only because the facts are what they are. This, too, is the judgement of Professor Peet. ' With regard to the main fact,' he says, ' that at some time or other certain of the people who subsequently came to be known as the Hebrews dwelt in Egypt for a period, and afterwards entered or re-entered Canaan, there is hardly a dissentient voice. The fact that Egyptian records contain no reference to the sojourn does not in the least affect the problem, for, in the first place, our Egyptian records are far from complete ; in the second place, the sojourn may well have been on so small a scale that the Egyptians never thought it worthy of recording ; and, in the third place, the Delta, which was the scene of the events, is still almost a closed book to us in early times, at least nine-tenths of our records coming from and referring to Upper Egypt.' On the other hand, Professor Peet is equally emphatic that, even with the Old Testament in our hand, we must be content to acknowledge that the exact circumstances attending the Exodus, the number who took part in it, the route that was followed, and

so on, are not known to us. We have, on points like these, many as yet uncorroborated Hebrew traditions, but nothing that can be called historical evidence.

If, then, these things are so—and modern Old Testament scholars are as definite on the point as our Liverpool Egyptologist—what about the ordinary Bible reader? He must, of course, learn to accommodate himself to the new situation, and though in the process he may suffer some little uneasiness, once the necessary readjustment has been made he will discover that while, on the one hand, he now has a rational explanation of many things in the Biblical narrative that used to perplex him, on the other, he has lost nothing that really matters. When, for example, he learns that the wonderful stories of Joseph in Egypt are not contemporary records, but vivid, imaginative pictures of the ninth or eighth century, he may be conscious of a certain drop in their value as history, but as literature, and above all as religion, they remain still the supreme things they have always been. These chapters show us how once men thought and taught concerning God. Is the worth of their teaching one whit the less because criticism has post-dated by a few centuries the narratives which contain it? We have a new setting for the jewel, but the jewel itself is untarnished and intact. Just as the fierce anti-papal passages in Shakespeare's 'King John' reflect the hatred and passions of the day in which, rather than of which, he wrote—of the sixteenth rather than the thirteenth century—so were the stories of the Egyptian sojourn

and exodus shaped and coloured by the religious conceptions of a later age than Moses. The reader who goes to them for history will often be sent empty away ; but he who goes for religion—the thing for which the Hebrew chronicler cared supremely—will find that he has lost nothing. He will find, too—and this is surely no small gain—that he has been delivered from all petty concern about what the excavator's spade may dig up in Egypt or anywhere else. After all, could there well be a more unedifying spectacle than that of a Christian believer nervously peering about in the darkness of Tutankhamen's tomb in the hope that he may find there some new ' confirmation ' of his faith in the Bible ?

## VIII

### ' THE CHILDREN'S BIBLE '

LET me preface this paper with a few sentences which I wrote some time ago in the *British Weekly* :

Can anything be done to give us the Bible in more attractive and readable form ? Look at the average copy of the Scriptures as it is put into the young reader's hands to-day. In most cases it is the Authorized Version, printed on thin paper, in small type, in double narrow columns, with the narrative chopped into chapters and minced into verses, and with no attempt to distinguish between its poetry and its prose. Fancy having to read Shakespeare under similar conditions ! Is it necessary or wise to go on insisting, as we usually have done, on the *whole* Bible ? Might it not be better if, in seeking to introduce the Bible to young readers, we were content at the outset to set



before them in modern and attractive form those sections of it which Christian experience has shown to be of supreme spiritual value ?

And now at last the thing has been done, and done extraordinarily well. The Cambridge University Press has issued *The Children’s Bible* and *The Little Children’s Bible*, both edited by the Rev. Professor Nairne, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, and Dr. T. R. Glover. These are names that awaken our confidence at once ; in such hands, we feel sure, the interests of religion and literature alike will be safe. Nor, though naturally opinions will differ when it comes to a question of what is to be omitted and what included in books of this kind, will a close acquaintance disappoint our first anticipations. To begin with, the page is ample, the type clear and bold, and though, with a few exceptions, the text of the Authorized Version is followed, it is arranged in intelligible paragraphs, without the irritating and misleading verse divisions under which we have so long suffered. The general plan of the volumes seems to me admirable. The contents of the smaller book are : The Story of Christmas, Stories that Jesus would Learn from His Mother, The Baptism, Kind Deeds of Jesus, Stories Told by Jesus, The Death and Resurrection of Jesus, God the Father and His World, The New Heaven and the New Earth. The larger book is divided thus : Part I., The Story of the Lord Jesus ; Part II., The Story of His People ; Part III., The Song-book of the Lord Jesus ; Epilogue. One result of this will be obvious at once. It puts the Old Testament, not in front of

the Gospels, but behind them, which is, of course, in Christian education, its proper place ; it makes Jesus first and all else subordinate to Him, which, again, is exactly as it should be. In this sense, paradoxical as it may sound, the Bible should always be read backwards. Half of the troubles which young readers experience in trying to understand the Old Testament are due to forgetfulness of this simple fact ; they begin with Genesis when they ought to begin with Jesus.

The crucial test of the work of the three editors is, of course, their selection of passages, and on the whole, and with one grave exception, they emerge from it triumphantly. Like every other reader, I could have wished that some things had been put in which have been left out. Among the Old Testament stories, for example, I miss the Death of Moses, David's Three Mighty Men, the weird little tragedy of Rizpah, Job, and Daniel. The extension by a very few lines of the narrative of Absalom would have brought in the striking story of Ittai, the loyal Philistine servant of David. And should there not have been a place, too, for that exquisite song of exile, 'By the rivers of Babylon,' omitting, of course, the closing verses, and, above all, for the lovely parable of Jonah's gourd ? And if it be urged that the selections were already as many as the editors dare make them, I would have given a little less room to Abimelech, to Samson, and to Solomon, and, if necessary, would have omitted altogether the paragraphs on the crossing of Jordan and the taking of Jericho. Yet, after all, this is rather futile criticism,

since nobody can expect that the editors’ judgement will tally in all respects with his own. Where, I think, they have laid themselves open to really serious criticism is in the entire omission from both books of any selection from the Acts of the Apostles. It is, indeed, difficult to understand how it has come about that a book which contains such stories as the stoning of Stephen, Peter’s escape from prison, Dorcas—that lovely little Joppa idyll—the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and of the Philippian gaoler, the shipwreck of St. Paul—to name but six of the jewels of the casket—should contribute nothing to the pages of a *Children’s Bible*.

At one other point, where the editors themselves evidently anticipated some unfriendly comment, it is to be hoped that the judgement of the Churches will be unhesitatingly on their side. ‘To prevent misunderstanding,’ they say in their preface, ‘it should be explained that it is in no sense intended that this small selection shall be a substitute for the whole Bible. On the contrary, it is hoped that the possession, in a convenient form, of those parts of Scripture most attractive to children may lead many to a lifelong love of the Christian story and the Word of God.’ The bibliolater, of course, will protest, and our editorial three must be prepared to be told that they are ‘mutilating the Word of God.’ But do let us clear our minds of cant. How many Christian people to-day read the whole Bible? Do we not all in practice make our own selection? Will even the protesting bibliolater himself lay his hand on his heart and tell us that he never skips Leviticus, or

Obadiah, or the second half of Zechariah ? For my own part I welcome these little books with enthusiasm and delight. Their editors have made us all their debtors, and when the results of their work can be got into the hands of teachers and parents all over the land, we shall have taken a long step towards a truer appreciation of the book which is at once the glory of our literature and the chief instrument of our religion.

## IX

## ‘THE BIBLE FOR YOUTH’

IN a volume of lectures on *Education and Religion*, edited by Dean (now Bishop) Burroughs, the Head Master of Eton, Dr. C. A. Alington, has some plain things to say about our teaching of the Bible. ‘We have laboriously taught most unimportant things,’ he says. ‘In the past, and to a great extent still, our teaching of the Old Testament has been disastrous . . . and when you come to the New Testament I confess that many of the books about it that I see for school purposes fill me with something like despair.’ These things, of course, have been said before, but so long as they are true it is well that someone with authority should go on saying them ; it is still better when the critic of things as they are can help us to make them as they should be. And that is just what two well-known Presbyterian ministers—the Revs. Dr. R. C. Gillie

and James Reid—have done by their jointly edited volume *The Bible for Youth*. In the preceding paper I gave an eager welcome to *The Children's Bible* and *The Little Children's Bible*, recently issued by the Cambridge University Press; now I want to commend with equal warmth the work of Dr. Gillie and Mr. Reid.

The publishers' part in this joint enterprise is beyond all praise. Here is a beautifully bound and printed volume, with five maps and over a thousand pages, and it costs but six shillings. I have seen no cheaper book since the bookman's happier days before the War. While the earlier volumes from Cambridge were intended for quite young children—from five to seven, and from seven to eleven respectively—this is for young people of from fourteen to eighteen. Rightly, therefore, the selections are much more abundant and more representative of the various kinds of literature to be found in the Bible. It is all to the good, too, that the editors, besides being well-equipped scholars, are Christian pastors, and bring to their task the trained instincts of the pastor and his intimate experience of the needs of ordinary Christian folk; and to none—not even to the young people themselves—is their work likely to be of such direct and immediate service as to the busy teacher who, with little time for study himself, is eager to avail himself of the labour of others.

But what advantage, it may be asked, is there in reading a Bible of this sort instead of the one which is already in everybody's hands? The answer

is that, unfortunately, the Bible which is in everybody's hands is, in large sections of it, neither read nor readable ; in some respects, indeed, it is one of the worst-edited books in the world. Take, for example, the wholly meaningless and unintelligent fashion in which in the Old Testament the prophecies, and in the New Testament the epistles, are jumbled together. If there is in either case any discoverable principle of arrangement, it appears to be simply that of the biggest first. Among the prophets Amos, who should be first, comes seventh, while Daniel, who should be last, comes fourth ; Joel, who is one of the latest, is wedged in between Hosea and Amos, the two earliest ; while Micah, who ought to be next to his contemporary Isaiah, is divided from him by eight others. Nor are we much better off in the New Testament. The reader who desires, say, to follow the development of the mind and thought of St. Paul is thrown completely off the track by the existing arrangement of the Pauline epistles, which comes near to standing the whole group on its head by placing what ought to be at the beginning—the two letters to Thessalonica—almost at the end.

Now, from all this confusion the reader of *The Bible for Youth* is happily delivered ; a path is cut for him through the jungle. The selections from Old Testament historians and prophets are so arranged that he can follow the course of the Hebrew people from their entry into Canaan, through all their varying fortunes, down to the Exile and Restoration. Similarly in the New Testament, the story in Acts and the Pauline literature are each used



so as to cast light on the other. Of necessity, many chapters in the long story are omitted ; but that matters little, since the careful reader will now know where to place the missing ones for himself. Inevitably, too, opinions will differ about what should be put in and what should be left out, and I have no wish to press individual preferences. The only point at which I think our editors have gone seriously astray is in printing poetry, such as the Song of Deborah and the Lament of David in the Old Testament, and the Magnificat and the Benedictus in the New, as if it were prose. Perhaps in a later edition it may be possible to amend this.

One feature of this volume of selections which distinguishes it from the earlier Cambridge volumes is the brief introductions and notes designed ‘to make the Scripture intelligible to the minds of young people with the modern outlook.’ This part of their task—a very difficult part—the editors have discharged with courage and wisdom. They adopt quite frankly the modern point of view, but there is nothing aggressive in their tone. Here and there, of course, one is tempted to put a note of interrogation in the margin. For example, instead of saying that ‘many of the Psalms must have owed their origin’ to David (p. 623), would it not be nearer the truth to say that a few of them may have owed their origin to him? Even so cautious and conservative a Biblical scholar as Dr. W. T. Davison admits that it cannot certainly be proved that David wrote any Psalms. The point is of no great importance—the Psalms are what they are, whoever

wrote them—but to attribute to the rude warrior-king of the Books of Samuel the authorship of ‘ many of the Psalms ’ is to create for some readers a riddle for which they can find no solution. But neither this nor any other point of difference can lessen my gratitude to Dr. Gillie and Mr. Reid for the service they have done us. Guidance such as is here provided should go far to save the Church from those mournful spiritual tragedies for which the misinterpretations of the past have been so largely responsible.

## X

‘ GOLD AND FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH ’<sup>1</sup>

ONCE more ‘ the time draws near the birth of Christ,’ and it will not be amiss to let our minds run back upon old, familiar things. Never in the long human story has there been such a birth; never has the coming of any other child meant what the coming of this child meant. Of all who looked, that first Christmas night, on the babe of Bethlehem, there was not one—not Herod, nor the wise men, nor the shepherds, nor Joseph, not even Mary herself—who so much as dreamed of what He was to bring to pass. For it is not too much to say that when Mary’s son was born volume one in the world’s history was closed up, volume two was opened. And that is true whatever view we take of the marvellous stories

<sup>1</sup> Nos. X. and XII. in this section were Advent papers.

of the Evangelists, or of what theology calls ‘the Person of Christ.’ Every time, during this year, we have written the figures ‘192-’ we have borne witness to the fact that, for us at least, there are but two great divisions in the world’s history ; there is the world B.C., and there is the world A.D. and the boundary-line runs by the manger-cradle of Bethlehem. Nor is there any sign that this ancient reign of Christ in human affairs is ever likely to come to an end. On the contrary, this day bears witness, as unmistakably as any day in the past, to the truth of Emerson’s saying that the name of Jesus is ‘not so much written as ploughed into the history of the world.’ A handful of freshly gathered illustrations may make appropriate reading for this last week of Advent. They will not be the less suggestive because they are all gathered in foreign fields.

The first comes from Italy in the form of Giovanni Papini’s *Story of Christ*. It is the work of a man who a few years ago was an unbeliever ; but the foaming flood of war forced him to seek fresh anchorage for his life ; he found it in Christ, and his book is his confession of faith. To some readers, it may be, apart from this fact, it will make no appeal ; it is too heated, not to say hysterical (though a competent New Testament scholar, I see, writing in the *Expositor*, gives it a place among ‘the ten best books on the life of Jesus’). But this does not matter ; the significant thing is that a Life of Christ, written in open disregard of modern criticism but in a white heat of personal conviction, has found readers by the tens of thousands alike in

Italy, France, and Great Britain. How shall we explain it? In part, no doubt, by the personality of the writer; in part, too, some will add, by the skill of the advertiser; but for the most part, surely by the eternal fascination of the writer's theme.

From Italy I turn to Japan, from which comes a remarkable human document published by the Student Christian Movement under the title of *A Gentleman in Prison*, and containing the confessions of Tokichi Ishii written in Tokio Prison. Ishii was awaiting execution for murder. Two lady missionaries who visited him left with him a copy of the New Testament. One day when he was tired of doing nothing he took down the book and began to read. What followed is best told in his own words. 'I went on,' he says, 'and my attention was taken by these words, "And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."' I stopped; I was stabbed to the heart, as if pierced by a five-inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it His compassion? I do not know what to call it. I only know that with an unspeakably grateful heart I believed. Through this simple sentence I was led into the whole of Christianity.'

My next story is of Mr. Gandhi. It was told in a recent lecture by Dr. Alington, the Head Master of Eton, on the authority of a friend. 'After one of his foreign tours, as a champion of Indian interests, he was received by a tremendous meeting of people in Calcutta. He was the popular hero of the day, and the place was crowded with 15,000 Bengalis

come to welcome him. My friend was the one Englishman present. For three hours the orators of Bengal spoke in praise of themselves and Mr. Gandhi; and then came the great moment when Mr. Gandhi rose and all this vast assembly settled themselves on their haunches waiting for their great orator to speak. His speech consisted of one sentence, and one sentence only: “The man to whom I owe most and to whom all India owes most is a man who never set his foot in India—and that was Christ.” And then he sat down. That was the whole of Mr. Gandhi’s speech.’ ‘When a man like that’—this is Dr. Alington’s quiet comment—‘speaks of our Lord in that way, it does suggest that India is looking to Christ in a way it has never looked before.’

I turn last to Equatorial Africa. Nearly twenty years ago one of the most brilliant young men in Europe was Dr. Albert Schweitzer, professor of theology in Strassburg, organist to the Paris Bach Society, author of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*—and all before he was thirty years of age. Orthodoxy naturally took alarm at his revolutionary theories, but he closed his famous book with these words:

He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side. He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: ‘Follow thou Me!’ and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

Then, a few years later, came the astonishing sequel. By giving organ recitals he obtained the means to equip himself as a doctor. Then he gave up his chair, turned his back on Europe, and buried himself among the natives of French Equatorial Africa, 'on the edge of the primeval forest.' So still does the old story repeat itself: 'They fell down and worshipped Him; and opening their treasures they offered unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.'

## XI

## 'THE MAN NOBODY KNOWS'

*The Man Nobody Knows*, by Bruce Barton, with a preface by the Hon. and Rev. J. G. Adderley, is another example of that strange fascination which Jesus has always had for the minds of men, and which was probably never stronger than it is to-day. Yesterday Papini's story was selling by tens of thousands in several different languages. And now comes an American man of business—'an advertising man,' he calls himself—with a little volume which during the last few months, it is said, has been one of America's 'best sellers.'

It would be very easy, if one were in the mood for it, to find fault with Mr. Barton's book. He is an American, which means that he has ways of saying things which are not our ways, and some of which, even to an American, might seem in doubtful taste. He is little concerned with modern scholarship, as is



seen in the use which he makes of the Fourth Gospel, and also by his reference to Nazareth as an 'obscure village.' The New Testament never speaks of Nazareth as a 'village,' but always as a 'city'; while George Adam Smith on our side of the Atlantic and Dr. Selah Merrill on his might have taught Mr. Barton that it was not 'obscure.' To some readers it will seem a much more serious blemish that he makes no attempt to come to terms with the miraculous element in the Gospel narratives and that his story ends with the Crucifixion. But readers who are wise will refuse to allow themselves to be put out by these or by any other faults which they may find, or think they find, in Mr. Barton's book. Its value lies—as indeed its title suggests—in this, that it is a challenge to our conventional ways of thinking about Jesus. Its author was dissatisfied and impatient with the books that he read and the sermons that he heard about Jesus, and so he set himself to try to do justice to aspects of His character which he thought were commonly ignored or misrepresented. And probably few who know anything of the mind of the average Christian, of yesterday or to-day, will deny that the challenge is called for. There is urgent need through all our Churches to re-think Jesus. As Dr. Cairns once said, we have lost the Jesus of the Gospels in a kind of official Christ who is wholly occupied in the discharge of mediatorial functions. Our conventional Christ, the Christ of the halo and of the stained-glass window, the Christ who figures so largely in Christian art, is not the Christ whom men

saw and loved and followed in Galilee and Jerusalem ; and if writers like Mr. Barton can teach us once more to see Him, we shall readily forgive them the inevitable jolts and jerks which the lesson may cause us.

One example will illustrate the point of view from which the book is written. In a chapter entitled 'The Sociable Man' there is a vigorous protest against conceptions of Jesus which make no room for those touches of geniality and gaiety which are so frequent in the Gospel story. The protest, it need hardly be said, is not new ; neither is it, therefore, unnecessary. This is how Mr. Barton makes it :

Jesus loved to be in the crowd. Apparently He attended all the feasts at Jerusalem, not merely as religious festivals but because all the crowds were there and He had an all-embracing fondness for men. We err if we think of Him as a social outsider. To be sure, it was the 'poor' who 'heard Him gladly,' and most of His close disciples were men and women of the lower classes. But there was a time when He was quite the favourite in Jerusalem. . . . He loved it all—the pressure of the crowd, the clash of wits, the eating, and the after-dinner talk. When He was criticized *because* He enjoyed it so much, and because His disciples did not fast and go about with gloomy looks, He gave an answer that throws a wonderful light upon His own conception of His mission. 'Do the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is still with them?' He demanded. 'Not a bit of it ; they enjoy every moment of his stay. I am the bridegroom ; these are My hours of celebration. Let My friends be happy with Me for the little while that we are together. There will be plenty of time for solemn thoughts after I am gone.'

Let it be granted that this is not the whole truth about Jesus ; still it is the truth, and our failure to recognize it has had the most disastrous effects on

Christian history. It is not merely that we have misunderstood Jesus ; our misunderstanding has created for us mistaken ideals of Christian duty. Would either Monasticism or Puritanism, at least in many of their forms, have been possible in a Church which had rightly understood Jesus ? Our starved and stunted conceptions of saintliness ; our shrinking from the pleasant things of life ; our fear to enter and possess in Christ’s name the kingdoms of art and literature and science ; the burning—to take one concrete example—of Wesley’s annotated edition of the works of Shakespeare by one of his smaller-minded followers, into whose hands unluckily it fell : what do things like these mean but that Christian men and women have ignored or misread facts in the life of our Lord which are just as real as others which they have taken for the whole ?

It was my good fortune not long ago to spend a memorable hour with a man now nearing the end of his long life who was brought up in the same home as the wife of Burne-Jones, the mother of Rudyard Kipling, and the mother of our Prime Minister, and he told me how much it had meant to him all through the years that in the home of his childhood, where religion was always the central and the supreme interest, books and music and happy laughter were never far away. Might not such homes be indefinitely multiplied amongst us if Christian parents and teachers were more mindful of those things in the life of Jesus which writers like Mr. Bruce Barton are now calling to our remembrance ?

## XII

## THE FASCINATION OF JESUS

IN the Advent season it is natural that the minds of Christians should turn toward Jesus. But the truth is that, not at Christmas only but at all times, no subject draws and holds men everywhere with such an endless fascination. 'I, if I be lifted up,' He is reported to have said, 'will draw all men unto Me'; and the amazing thing is not so much that the claim was once made as that every day it is being made good. Some illustrations of this, all gathered in foreign fields, I have given in an earlier paper: Papini of Italy, Tokichi Ishii of Japan, Gandhi of India, and Schweitzer of Equatorial Africa. Elsewhere in these pages I have written of Lord Charnwood's book on the Fourth Gospel, with its striking personal confession of faith, and of that very unconventional life of Jesus by an American man of business, *The Man Nobody Knows*, which has been bought and read by tens of thousands on both sides of the Atlantic. And now at this moment there lies upon my table a little pile of books all published within the last few weeks and all centring round the same sacred figure. Let us glance at them and try to understand what they mean.

The first is Dr. W. T. Grenfell's *What Christ Means to Me*. It is the work of one more skilled to serve than to write, and there is a curious incoherency in some of its pages. But Dr. Grenfell's true record is in Labrador, and what Christ means to him can be better read there than here. Yet one word from

his little book gives the key to his heroic life : ' It never worried me,' he says, ' whether I believed infallible Pope, infallible fundamentalist, or infallible teacher of science that is current. Christ ever meant to me a peerless Leader whose challenge was not to save ourselves, but to lose ourselves, not to understand Him, but to have courage to follow Him.' Next comes, in a volume of over 400 pages, sold for half a crown, Dr. Paterson Smyth's *People's Life of Christ*. The publishers announce that already over twenty editions have been sold, and I have seen copies of it displayed at one of our Manchester railway stations as if it were the popular novel of the year. And third is *The Christ of the Indian Road*, by E. Stanley Jones, an American Methodist missionary in India, who describes in this book ' that mass movement in mind ' which, he declares, is taking place all over India to-day ; ' the spiritual atmosphere of India is becoming saturated with Christ's thoughts and ideals, and is heavy to the point of precipitation into Christian forms and expression.' And the remarkable thing is that although the book was only published in this country a few months ago already over 60,000 copies have been called for.

But the most significant of recent books, though in a quite different way, is Mr. Middleton Murry's *Life of Jesus*. I do not find it an easy book to write about. Some pages in it I read with shining eyes and a beating heart ; others with deep and grave perplexity. At times Mr. Murry seems so wanton and perverse in his handling of our only records that it becomes difficult to believe that his book is a real



contribution to the better understanding of Jesus ; and then again he surprises and delights us with some penetrating and illuminating judgement, some touch of beauty and insight, which reveal alike the poet and the seer. Not only so, but Mr. Murry writes with a true and reverent regard for Jesus, a regard that never lapses into patronage. Jesus, we read, 'was the supreme man-poet, prophet, hero ; indeed, I know not what predicate of supreme humanity could be denied Him' ; He was 'one whose ears were attuned as no man's have ever been to hear the secret voice of God' ; in Him 'God was manifest as He has never since been manifest in man.'

The same kind of language is used of the teaching of Jesus. He expressed 'ineffable truths' with 'a simple profundity which has never been approached by another man' ; His is 'the highest and the truest wisdom ever taught to men,' unique and eternally valid. Nor does it seem to me that some of Mr. Murry's critics have quite done justice to this side of his book. My own feeling about it is best expressed in the words of an anonymous writer in the *Expository Times* :

Mr. Murry does not use the 'Catholic' terms, and would repudiate them. But he holds the substance which they represent. After all, it is difficult to put into words our sense of the supremacy of Jesus. Catholic experience and theology have tried to do this in the traditional doctrinal terms. Mr. Murry has as real and profound and reverent an attitude to Jesus as any Catholic believer, though he would not use traditional terms . . . therefore any and all of his errors of judgement are easily forgotten in the light of his attitude to Jesus, 'for he loved much.'



But, after all, the really significant thing is not that Mr. Murry holds these or those views of Jesus, but that, being the man he is, he was moved to write his book at all ; not that he sees, or does not see, some of the things which others of us believe we see, but that he is looking. He too has felt the spell which Jesus is laying on so many of the minds of his generation ; he wrote his book, he himself tells us, because he needed to write it. Sometimes to-day, when good people come together to take counsel with one another, the talk readily grows fearful and despondent.

The world is very evil,  
The times are waxing late—

so it seemed to a saint in the Middle Ages, and so it sometimes seems to ourselves. And, truly, there is enough to sadden and perplex ; and yet I will be bold to say—and it was to say this that this short paper has been written—that never since Mary's Son was born have so many eyes been fastened upon Him, never have so many been sure that His is the one true way of life for men, as to-day.

### XIII

#### A PREACHER'S READING

I CHANCED the other day on an old ' Claudius Clear ' letter—one in that famous correspondence with which Robertson Nicoll used to instruct and edify the readers of the *British Weekly*. The letter was

entitled 'An M.P.'s Library,' and contained the substance of an address by Nicoll to a company of M.P's on 'books that might well be read by politicians.' For 'politicians' read 'preachers,' and there is my topic.

Two or three times in the course of his letter Nicoll insists on the need of clarity. Clarity, he says, is 'the essential feature of public speech and writing which aims at the average man'; without it 'a politician or a journalist can produce very little effect'; and the writers whom he commends all possessed it in a marked degree. They are, in the order in which he names them 'Junius,' Burke, Sydney Smith, Macaulay, Mill, Bagehot, and Goldwin Smith. To these he adds the speeches of John Bright and the novels of Anthony Trollope.

Now, the clearness which Nicoll laid down as the first requisite of the politician and the journalist is every whit as essential for the preacher. To say what you mean as simply, as directly, as forcibly as it can be said—this is what the preacher must seek first, whether the other things which go to the making of what is called 'a good style' be added to him or not. Indeed, if this be attained, I am not sure that there is much else in the matter of style with which the preacher needs greatly to concern himself. The trouble with the young preacher is that, while he is ready to agree with this, he is apt to imagine that anybody can be lucid and direct who 'has a mind to,' though the truth is that anybody can be vague, loose, and turgid—which is, in fact, what most speakers are. But the apparently

effortless ease of one whose words cleave their way to the mark, like the winged shafts of a master bowman, is won only by the labour which in this world is the price of all good things. And one chief way by which the preacher may hope to attain it is that indicated by Nicoll : he must keep good literary company, he must read the right books. In saying this I am not thinking of what may be called a preacher's 'professional' reading, his Biblical and theological books. Indeed, one has still sorrowfully to confess—though things are mending—that many of these will be no help to him in learning the right use of his mother tongue. I am thinking rather of books of the kind recommended by Nicoll to his audience of M.P.s.

Nicoll's list I must resist the temptation to discuss, though, with certain qualifications, I should be prepared cordially to adopt it. In particular I should like to endorse his commendation of Macaulay. 'Everyone,' he says, 'who wishes to write clear, pure, telling English must be his disciple.' Macaulay's genius had its grave and obvious limitations, upon which Lord Morley has commented with such severity ; nevertheless, some little experience in trying to help beginners has convinced me that in literary construction, the building up of words into sentences, and sentences into paragraphs, and paragraphs into the larger whole of a sermon or essay, there are few better models than Macaulay. Is not one chief reason why he retains his hold so easily on the reader's mind that he has taken such pains to make the transition from point to point easy

and natural? Where another writer would have been content to hurry us along over a rough road in a springless cart, so that we are utterly tired out long before the end of the journey is reached, Macaulay sets us all down at the inn blithe and refreshed and ready for more.

To the great writers named by Nicoll I may add one or two others whose friendship every preacher will be the better for cultivating. And first, Southey. On most that Southey wrote—and he was one of the most industrious workmen in the history of our literature—the dust now lies thick and undisturbed; but a few of his short poems and biographies still find readers; and so long as men care, through the medium of clear and nervous English, to be in contact with a good man who loved God and his fellows and all good books, Southey's *Letters* will not be forgotten. With Southey it is easy to associate Wesley, whose life he wrote. I hope it is something more than denominational partiality that leads me to say that in the matter of style Wesley has not always had justice done to him. He was, of course, never the conscious artist, coining like a cunning workman the happy phrase; but cleanness and exactness of language were with him almost an instinct. On this I am content to quote Edward FitzGerald's praise of Wesley's *Journal*. 'If you don't know it,' he wrote to one of his friends, 'do know it. It is remarkable to read, pure, unaffected, and undying English, while Addison and Johnson are tainted with a style which all the world imitated.'

Among more recent writers I have only space to

mention two—Matthew Arnold and Mark Rutherford. Arnold's prose has suffered both through its association with theological controversies and its occasional mannerisms. Nevertheless, when this is admitted, I am still prepared to maintain against all comers that for the preacher who believes that it is worth while taking any trouble to be orderly, lucid, and precise there is no modern prose better worth studying than his. We may deny Arnold's conclusions to the point of vehemence, but at least he is always and immediately intelligible. Did anyone ever need to read any of his sentences twice over in order to be sure of their meaning? This may seem small praise until we remember of how comparatively few writers the same can be said. And yet for perfect precision of diction, for luminous and severe beauty, for the simplicity 'which is the first step of nature and the last of art,' I am not sure that I should not put Mark Rutherford before them all.

## XIV

WORDSWORTH'S ATTITUDE TO  
CHRISTIANITY

I HAVE spent some happy moments and hope to spend many more, examining Professor de Selincourt's magnificent edition of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, published by the Oxford University Press. It raises once more the question of the poet's relation

to Christianity. The *Prelude*, I may remind the reader by way of preface, is Wordsworth's autobiography, the story of the growth of his own mind. It was finished in 1805, when the poet was thirty-five, but not published until a few months after his death in 1850. The only text hitherto available has been that left by the poet himself after the manifold revisions to which he had subjected it during the long interval between 1805 and 1850. Now, thanks to Professor de Selincourt's patient labour, we are able to compare the final text with the original and to trace the course of its gradual development. What light do the facts thus revealed cast upon the poet's attitude to the Christian faith?

Let us hear Professor de Selincourt's own answer to the question. During the years when the *Prelude* was being written, Wordsworth's faith, he says, was in no way tinged with dogmatic Christianity; Christianity had no special message for him. In illustration of this he quotes a striking passage from an hitherto unpublished fragment, written about that time, in which Wordsworth speaks of

one interior life  
In which all beings live with God, themselves  
Are God, existing in the mighty whole,  
As indistinguishable as the cloudless east  
Is from the cloudless west, when all  
The hemisphere is one cerulean blue—

a doctrine which, whatever else we may say of it, hardly gets its inspiration from the New Testament. Gradually, however, Wordsworth turned more



consciously to the Christian faith, and in the subsequent revisions of his poem was at pains to cover up the traces of his early pantheism, and to relate, as far as possible, his naturalistic religion to a definitely Christian dogma. But the changes thus introduced, says Professor de Selincourt, are from the brain that wrote the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*; they do not represent the Wordsworth of 1805. Whether the later ideas are true or not he does not discuss, but he regrets their presence here as an unhappy obscuration of the real mind of the author of the *Prelude*. It would have been better, he thinks, if their expression and exposition had been left to another poem.

On this two things may be said. In the first place, while it is of course true that Wordsworth's faith suffered severely under the shock of the French Revolution, it is doubtful if the change was as far-reaching or as long lasting as is sometimes supposed. When he returned from France in 1792 his sister Dorothy was still expecting him to take holy orders, and the letters which he wrote on the occasion of his brother's death at sea in 1805—the very year of the *Prelude*—scarcely suggest the 'semi-atheist,' or 'free-thinker,' which the Wordsworth of that period has been declared to be. But—and this is the second point I wish to make—however far Wordsworth wandered from his early faith, he came back to it and remained in it to the end of his life. For the evidence of this furnished by the *Prelude* I must refer the reader to Professor de Selincourt's introduction, to which I may add

an example which he does not give. Writing of books in 1805 Wordsworth said they are

only less

For what we may become, and what we need,  
Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God.

In the edition of 1850 this significant line is added :

Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.

Nor is the *Prelude* our only evidence. Writing to his friend Sir George Beaumont in 1825, Wordsworth said :

Theologians may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will, the religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure ; and gratitude is the handmaid to hope, and hope the harbinger of faith. I look abroad upon Nature, I think of the best part of our species, I lean upon my friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of John, and my creed rises up of itself, with the ease of an exhalation, yet a fabric of adamant.

And there is a very pleasant picture of the poet in his old age bidding farewell in the market place of Ambleside to a young friend who was just starting for Oxford : ' He launched into a dissertation on the subject of college habits, and of his utter distrust of all attempts to nurse virtue by an avoidance of temptation. He expressed also his entire want of confidence (from experience, he said) of highly wrought religious expression in youth. The safest training for the mind in religion he considered to be a contemplating of the character and personal history of Christ. " Work it," he said, " into your thoughts, into your imagination, make it a real presence in the mind." '

I do not forget, of course, the use which some who cannot deny the facts are ready to make of them. They see in them a sign only of the poet's failing powers and of his 'apostasy.' The Wordsworth of the later years, we are told, was not inspired, he was only orthodox ; the rebel quieted his doubts, made his humble submission to the Church, and henceforth ceased to be interesting. These are statements which it is obviously impossible to discuss here. For myself, I do not believe that the contrast between the earlier and the later Wordsworth is anything like so sharp and clean-cut as it has become the fashion to assume, or that, if it were, the falling off is to be accounted for by the poet's change of religious faith. But at the moment I must be content to point to the simple fact, of which Professor de Selincourt's great work gives fresh and striking illustration, that in Wordsworth's case, whether we regret it or rejoice in it, the multiplying experiences of life only served to deepen and strengthen his attachment to the faith and Church of his fathers.

## XV

### THE RELIGION OF SCOTT

IN the previous paper something was said about Wordsworth's attitude to Christianity. From Wordsworth it is an easy step to Scott, his great contemporary, who was born in the following year.

But there is a better reason than that for referring to him to-day. It is just a hundred years (1926) since the cruel storm broke upon him which spread such pitiful ruin over the closing years of his life. Only a few weeks before Scott had made the first entry in his now famous *Journal*, and in the pages of that amazing book all the world may now read how the strong man bent to the storm and then with what heroic, incredible toil he set himself to repair the havoc it had wrought. The *Journal*, though of course it was known and used by Scott's biographer, was not published in full until 1890. 'The best book that has been for many a year,' Edward Burne-Jones wrote: 'bless him all over, inside and out; when was his like ever?' Hutton, of the *Spectator*, was just as unstinting in his praise: 'Such a book as the world has not often seen, . . . one of the greatest gifts which our English literature has ever received.'

With Scott, as with Wordsworth, our interest here is religious rather than literary. Was Scott a Christian? He was, of course, a firm believer in God and immortality, but even readers as sympathetic and admiring as R. H. Hutton and Robertson Nicoll hesitate to say more. Hutton speaks of his 'semi-Christian Stoicism'; Scott, he says, 'had the highest kind of natural goodness rather than of the spiritual'; 'though the heart of religion is in him, you cannot say that his *Journal* shows what can be called a spiritual nature.' He never seemed, says Nicoll, to come into direct contact with Christ; he endured, without repining, the calamities that came

upon him, but in a journal in which he unbare his very heart 'I do not remember that there is any instance of his asking help in prayer.'

But if we may not claim for Scott the Christian name—there would need to be some careful defining before we pronounce with assurance on that matter—at least it will not be denied that the influence of his life and work has told steadily on the Christian side. Where among all our records of the dying have we any more moving entry than Lockhart's story of Scott's last days? One or two sentences may be quoted from it, familiar as they are: 'He expressed a wish that I should read to him, and when I asked from what book, he said, "Need you ask? There is but one."' When through weakness his mind wandered they heard him murmuring 'a fragment of the Bible (especially the prophecies of Isaiah and the book of Job), or some petition of the litany, or a verse of some psalm (in the old Scotch metrical version), or some of the magnificent hymns of the Romish ritual, in which he had always delighted. We very often heard distinctly the cadence of the "Dies Iræ"; and I think the very last stanza that we could make out was the first of a still greater favourite:

Stabat Mater dolorosa,  
Juxta crucem Lachrymosa,  
Dum pendebat Filius.

'Lockhart,' he said, in what were almost his last words, 'I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man, be virtuous, be religious,

be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.'

But more even than this is the influence of the *Waverley* novels. What it has meant to have that clean, strong wind now for more than a century blowing through our national life and literature! Who is there who knows anything of English fiction in the eighteenth century, what it was and what it might have become, who does not thank God for Walter Scott? Andrew Lang once wrote an essay on 'The Evolution of Literary Decency,' in which he called attention to 'the sharp and sudden revolution of taste' through which our literature passed in the later years of the eighteenth century, and of which, he said, the most obvious and probable cause was 'what we may call the Wesleyan Reformation acting on the middle classes far beyond the bounds of the Wesleyan communion.' This is grateful testimony to a Methodist's ears; and yet perhaps we may wonder how long-lived the revolution would have proved but for the backing of Scott's mighty and salutary example.

There remains the evidence of the *Journal* itself. It is not easy to copy out with a steady hand some of the things Scott wrote there as wave after wave broke over him: 'For myself, I scarce know how I feel, sometimes as firm as the Bass Rock, sometimes as weak as the wave that breaks on it'—this when his wife died; and this again when *Count Robert of Paris* proved all too plainly that his power was gone: 'God knows, I am at sea in the dark, and the vessel leaky, I think, into the bargain.' Yet he



writes, 'God to aid, I will not be dethroned by any rebellious passion that may rear its standard against me. . . . I want to finish my task, and then good-night. I will never relax my labour in these affairs, either for fear of pain or love of life. I will die a free man, if hard working will do it.' Nor was it mere selfish pride that drove him on: 'If I had once justice done to other folks, I do not much care.' Is this only a 'semi-Christian Stoicism'? To some it will seem hard to distinguish from the noblest Christian fortitude.

I leave the subject with what are to me the most satisfying words ever written about Scott: 'If anywhere in another world,' says Mark Rutherford, 'the blessings which men have conferred here are taken into account in distributing reward, surely the choicest in the store of the Most High will be reserved for His servant Scott! It may be said of others that they have made the world wise or rich, but of him it must be said that he, more than all, has made the world happier—wiser too, wiser through its happiness.'

## XVI

SIR J. G. FRAZER AND JOHN NEWTON

SIR J. G. FRAZER, the author of *The Golden Bough*, and one of the most accomplished scholars of our time, is also the author of a delightful collection of miscellaneous literary papers entitled *Sir Roger de*

*Coverley and other Literary Pieces.* This is not the place, nor am I the man, to speak of the work which Sir James is doing in the field of scientific research which he has made peculiarly his own. Old friends of James Hope Moulton will remember how he used to kindle at the mention of the great Cambridge scholar's name and books. Particularly he loved to quote some sentences from the preface to his *Passages from the Bible* (reprinted in this volume): 'The reading of it (the Bible) breaks into the dull round of common life like a shaft of sunlight on a cloudy day or a strain of solemn music heard in a mean street,' and so on. Nor am I going to review the very miscellaneous contents of this volume, but I wish to enter a respectful but very earnest protest against the contemptuous, the unworthy, and, as I believe, the wholly unjust and unwarranted language in which in his essay on Cowper Sir James allows himself to speak of Cowper's friend John Newton.

Newton was not, of course, a Free Churchman; he was an Anglican clergyman of the Evangelical school; yet there were few men in England in the eighteenth century whose names we Free Churchmen hold in higher regard to-day than his for the warmth of his evangelical fervour and above all for his utter honesty and sincerity. The historian Lecky calls him 'one of the purest and most unselfish of saints.' He was a poet and man of letters, too, of no mean distinction. His autobiography, Goldwin Smith says, is a monument of his age 'not less characteristic than is Cellini's memoir of the times in which he

lived,' while one of his hymns (' In evil long I took delight,') Francis Turner Palgrave, who included it in his *Treasury of Sacred Song*, says that in its bare simplicity and sincerity it is a hymn that John Bunyan or the great twelfth-century religious poet Jacopone of Todi might have been proud or thankful to own.

What, then, is the occasion of Sir J. G. Frazer's sneers? Mainly, though not exclusively—for apparently the darkest superstition of a South Sea Islander would fare better at his hands than does evangelical religion—mainly, I say, it is this: that Newton's indiscretions and the religious stimulants with which he plied Cowper's sensitive and highly-strung nature were a main cause of the terrible relapse into insanity which the poet suffered a few years after settling at Olney. The charge, of course, is no new one: it has been met and refuted again and again; but as Sir J. G. Frazer persists in it the answer must be repeated likewise.

Has Sir James read Newton's own *Authentic Narrative*? It is difficult to think he has not, and the mere asking of the question may seem like a gratuitous impertinence. But if he has, the still greater difficulty remains of understanding how any man of sympathy and insight, after reading a story every page of which is stamped with sincerity and truth, could bring himself to speak of the writer as he speaks of Newton. Moreover, let Cowper's letters to his friend be examined. The best known of them is the humorous, rhyming epistle which, often as it has been quoted, may be quoted once

more : ' I have writ,' he says, ' in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penned ; which that you may do, ere Madam and you, are quite worn out with jiggling about, I take my leave, and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me, W.C.' Is it so, we may well ask, that a man would write to one who habitually practised on him the black arts of the spiritual inquisitor and taskmaster ?

The truth is, as Mr. Augustine Birrell says, Cowper's terrible fits of depression in their origin had no more to do with religion than with the Binomial Theorem. They began, as Sir J. G. Frazer's own narrative makes abundantly plain, before Newton had come into his life ; they continued, and in a still more aggravated form, long after he had passed out of it again. To a man unhappily constituted as poor Cowper was, almost any circumstance might have proved the occasion of a fresh outbreak, and to talk as if religion in general and John Newton in particular, were the ' main cause ' of the mischief is sheer perversity and injustice. Anyone who desires to read a full and fair statement of the facts should turn to Canon Overton's *English Church in the Eighteenth Century* ; or, if Overton be thought a prejudiced witness—I know no reason why he should be—we may listen to Mr. Clement Shorter, who, at any rate, will not be suspected of any bias towards evangelicalism. ' There was a time,' he confesses frankly, ' when he " positively hated " Newton for

his supposed baneful influence over Cowper ; but,' he goes on, ' a careful survey of the facts modifies any such impression. The student of the two volumes of his *Life and Correspondence* will be compelled to look at " the old African blasphemer," as he called himself, with much of sympathy.' I repeat, there is no honester, kindlier spirit to be met with in the annals of eighteenth century Christianity and it is greatly to be regretted that Sir J. G. Frazer should have spoiled our reading of his delightful pages by the repetition of these old and baseless charges.

## XVII

### WILLIAM BRIGHTY RANDS

' AND who,' someone may ask, ' is William Brighty Rands, that we should trouble to clear away the moss from the letters of his name to-day ? ' The question is natural enough, for I meet many well-read men and women to whom now Rands is not so much even as a name. It is just over a hundred years since he was born, but, given as this generation is to the observance of centenaries, his passed, so far as my knowledge goes, without a word. And, indeed, if I were asked to mention, for the benefit of the curious, some sources to which they might turn for information, my list would soon be exhausted. An article in the *British Weekly* long ago ; a few pages by A. H. Japp in Miles's *Poets and Poetry of the*

*Nineteenth Century*; a couple of columns in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; a page of sincere appreciation in Professor Walker's *Literature of the Victorian Era*; and a few autobiographical fragments in Rands's own book, *Henry Holbeach*—these are all that I can muster. There is no biography of him; he is rarely alluded to in current literature; and even *Chambers's Encyclopædia of English Literature* knows him not at all. Indeed Rands did his best to hide himself from the eyes of posterity. He rarely wrote under his own name, and those who want his books to-day must search for them under the pseudonyms of 'Henry Holbeach,' 'Matthew Browne,' 'Timon Fieldmouse,' and the author of *Lilliput Levee*.

One brief paragraph will suffice to tell the main facts of his personal history. He was born in London on Christmas Eve, 1823, and reared in the strictest school of the Dissenters of that day, 'a Puritan boy, familiar only with the Bible, the hymn-book, Milton, and his mother's knee.' 'One of my very earliest recollections,' he says, 'is of kneeling down in a darkened room while my mother prayed aloud. In the morning, at noon, again at night, that was her custom.' He gives us some interesting glimpses of the 'high Calvinistic Arians' among whom he was brought up. One of them was reported to have once quoted Shakespeare; 'but,' says Rands, 'I regard the anecdote as apocryphal, more especially as I know the popular horror of anything dramatic was so excessive that the fact of Milton having written "Comus" and "Samson Agonistes" was often



mentioned to his discredit ; and only the enormous prestige of his name, and, perhaps, the fact that he had been an Arian, "carried off" (as painters say) the terrible stain of his having written dialogue in verse.' In the eyes of these good people the Establishment was 'the Scarlet Woman, the abomination of desolation, the destroyer of souls.' Whether anyone in the Church of England, or with an Arminian faith, could be saved, except 'so as by fire,' was open to doubt. Yet whose heart does not warm to the minister of this little flock : 'A very energetic, active man, wiry in frame ; bred a shoemaker, self-taught ; his heart amply supplied with the milk of human kindness, and his creed blazing with damnation. . . . A superficial listener might have thought his heart only a cast-iron muscle for pumping up blood into a one-ideal brain ; and the very next morning, when a poor brother went to him for help he would say with tears on his furrowed old cheeks, "Brother, I would if I could ; but I lent my watch and seal on Saturday to Brother Watkins, who wanted to raise a sovereign." ' Such were the simple folk among whom Rands grew up. Much of his limited education was derived, it is said, from a habit of reading at the second-hand bookstalls. He lived a very varied life—in a warehouse, then on the stage, then a clerk in an attorney's office, and, finally, as a reporter in the Committee-rooms of the House of Commons. Meanwhile, he was busy with all sorts of literary and journalistic work, writing for the *Spectator*, the *Contemporary Review*, *Good Words*, and many other papers and magazines.

He was also, says the *Dictionary of National Biography*, for some time a regular preacher in a chapel at Brixton; but of this chapter of his life I have been able to learn nothing more. He died in 1882, and is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery.

'Well'—again the question may be asked—'why should we recall him to-day?' For three things. First, for his hymn 'One Lord there is, all lords above,' which has found its way into the *Congregational Church Hymnal* and other collections. Next, for two at least of his prose works: *Henry Holbeach*, from which I have quoted above, and *Chaucer's England*. I hunted for that book for years, and ran it down quite recently in a Manchester shop, half disguised by a careless binder, who had lettered it 'Brown' instead of 'Browne.' But, above all, Rands deserves to be remembered as, to borrow James Payn's phrase, 'the laureate of the nursery.' A few of his poems are rightly included by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, both in his *Oxford Book of English Verse*, and his *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*. As Professor Walker says, the anthology must be select indeed in which this child's song to 'the World' would not deserve a place:

- 1. Great, wide, beautiful, wonderful World!
- With the wonderful water round you curl'd,
- And the wonderful grass upon your breast—
- 2. World, you are beautifully drest.

The wonderful air is over me,  
And the wonderful wind is shaking the tree;  
It walks on the water, and whirls the mills,  
And talks to itself on the tops of the hills.

You friendly Earth ! how far do you go,  
 With the wheatfields that nod, and the rivers that flow,  
 With cities and gardens and cliffs and isles,  
 And people upon you for thousands of miles ?

Ah, you are so great, and I am so small,  
 I tremble to think of you, World, at all !  
 And yet, when I said my prayers to-day,  
 A whisper inside me seem'd to say—

' You are more than the Earth, tho' you are such a dot :  
 ' You can love and think, and the Earth can not ! '

It may be noted that the year of Rands's birth is given in Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* as 1862, and of his death by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch as 1880. Both are wrong ; the correct dates are given above.

1823-1882

## XVIII

T. T. LYNCH b 123

I HAD the good fortune recently to pick up for a few pence the memoir of T. T. Lynch, and—slow reader as I am—I ran through its three hundred odd pages almost 'at a down-sitting,' so eager was my desire to learn something more about this remarkable man. I do not know for how many of my readers the name of T. T. Lynch brings with it to-day any definite associations. He was a Congregational minister in North London during the third quarter of the last century. He wrote a number of books, all of them now out of print and purchasable for a

trifle at the second-hand dealer's. A few who knew his worth waited on his ministry with profit and delight ; the multitude passed him by. All his life he battled with disease, and for many years was able to conduct only one service on Sunday. Sometimes, when he was unable to preach at all, he would write out a sermon for another to read—*Sermons for my curates*, he playfully called them, and under that title they were afterwards published. And even these, we are told, were sometimes composed in the intervals between the suffocating spasms of the cruel disease from which he suffered. He died at fifty-three, ' a bird's heart without a bird's wings,' to quote his own pathetic phrase about himself. What is there here, it may well be asked, to keep alive his name to-day ? Yet Dr. Horton bears witness that when his own long Hampstead ministry began, the echoes of Lynch's voice were all about him, and he frequently met those who had found in his words the breath of life. He is given a place in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, and in Miles's *Poets and Poetry of the Nineteenth Century*, while a contributor to Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* credits him with no fewer than four-and-twenty hymns that are still in common use. This is probably much too generous an estimate, but at least one hymn of his—' Gracious Spirit, dwell with me '—is known and sung wherever men and women come together for Christian worship.

This reference to Lynch's hymns brings me to the one incident of his life which has led me to write of him. He published in 1855 a small collection of

'hymns for heart and voice,' entitled *The Rivulet*. His aim in publishing, apart from a natural desire to find expression for a real if slender lyric gift, appears to have been to furnish Congregational worship with hymns which might on occasion vary the ancient, solitary reign of Isaac Watts. But he had reckoned without his host. The legions of theological orthodoxy fell upon him and his little book with a strange, incredible fury. He was charged with 'deliberately contradicting the Word of God,' and 'defaming the character of the Son of God'; he was told that he had written a book in which 'from beginning to end, there was not one particle of vital religion or evangelical piety,' that 'nearly the whole of the hymns might have been written by a Deist, and a very large portion might be sung by a congregation of Free-thinkers.' And if one ventures to ask, 'Why so hot, my masters?' the answer seems to be that the sound doctrine which it was insisted ought to find a place in every hymn was present only as sweetness rather than as visible lumps of sugar:

Religion, sir, is only fudge—  
Let's have theology.

Of course, Lynch was not without his friends; men like Thomas Binney, Edward White, and Newman Hall came forward in his defence; but the 'Rivulet Controversy' remains one of the least edifying chapters in the history of English Nonconformity in the last century.

'Why, then,' it may be asked, 'drag the old and

shabby thing once more into the light ? ' Well, just that our eyes may see more clearly what a shabby thing it is. For, old as is this particular example of embittered orthodoxy, the evil thing itself is still alive, and there is no more un-Christlike thing on this sinful earth. I will not now pause to ask why it is that in religious controversy the ugliest side of human nature is so often uppermost, nor why those who espouse the cause of ' orthodoxy ' are sometimes the first to cast off even the restraints of ordinary decency ; neither need I speak of the mischief which this temper works in those who cherish it, and in the still wider circle of those who witness it. But what of the unhappy man who is at the centre of the storm ? The physical hurt done to a frail and delicate man like Lynch when he is set upon by ecclesiastical ' roughs ' is bad enough ; but there is something worse than that, as his own account of the controversy makes only too evident. No man can breathe for years the atmosphere of controversy without the gravest risks, both intellectual and moral. It disturbs his sense of balance and of the proportion of things. All the finer fibres of his being suffer from the ceaseless wear and tear. The daily doses of slander and suspicion, like daily doses of arsenic, tell in the end their soul-deadening tale.

In George Adam Smith's *Life of Henry Drummond* there is a letter—I wish I had space to quote it in full—addressed to his friend Sankey. Drummond, too, had been charged with heresy. (What a curious blindness, by the way, orthodoxy shows in the



selection of its victims! Fancy anyone scenting heresy in Drummond's Christmas booklets! As Lynch said about his *Rivulet*, one would have as soon expected a dragon from a dove's nest as a controversy from them.) These are the closing words of the letter:

Let me thank you most heartily for your kindness in writing. The way to spoil souls, to make them hard and bitter and revengeful, is to treat them as many treat me. If I have escaped this terrible fate it is because there are others like yourself, who 'think no evil.' But tell your friends that they know not what they do or what solemn interest they imperil when they judge.

Alexander Whyte was right: it is better that error should live than that love should die.

## XIX

### MARK RUTHERFORD: THE NOVELIST OF ENGLISH DISSENT

It is forty years since I made my first acquaintance with the writings of Mark Rutherford, yet I remember it as if it were only yesterday. I was at the time a very juvenile student whose eyes were hardly yet opened to the glory of the world of literature. *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* had just appeared—preceded, of course, by the *Autobiography* and the *Deliverance*, but these were as yet not even names to me—and a front-page article in the *British Weekly*

set me hot-foot on the track of the new writer. Ever since that day Mark Rutherford has had one of the chief places in my little literary Pantheon, and I still find myself going back to the old and now familiar pages with the same zest with which I first opened them. It is, therefore, with special pleasure that I welcome Mr. Fisher Unwin's beautiful and handy reprint, in six volumes, of Mark Rutherford's novels. The first of the six contains the *Autobiography*, a reproduction of Mr. Arthur Hughes's striking portrait, and a 'Memorial Introduction' by Mr. H. W. Massingham. The same publisher has also reprinted in a companion volume the five papers on Mark Rutherford which originally appeared in Sir William Robertson Nicoll's *A Bookman's Letters*, which is now out of print. It is fitting that both Sir William and Mr. Massingham should be associated with this re-issue, since they have done more than any others to commend Mark Rutherford's work to the notice of the reading public.

Mr. Massingham's introduction is written with true insight and appreciation. He has not been able, apparently, to gather any fresh facts concerning Mark Rutherford's personal history. Mark Rutherford had an unconquerable dislike of talking about either himself or his writings. When anyone tried to draw him out on the subject of his books he would admit that he had written something on Spinoza, but as that was not what his questioner wanted to hear about the conversation did not get very far. Indeed, so resolute was his silence that his own daughter had grown to womanhood before she discovered that her

father was an author at all. Mr. Massingham's list of his publications is nearly complete, but not quite. It omits the first of them, a pamphlet on the extension of the franchise, in the form of a letter to Mr. G. J. Holyoake (1866), and two volumes (1897 and 1899) dealing with the text of some of Coleridge's poems. I miss, too, any reference to the influence on Mark Rutherford of Carlyle and the great Welsh preacher Caleb Morris. Carlyle's letter to him was one of the first things that caught my eye in the old house in Cheyne Row, Chelsea. To Caleb Morris Mark Rutherford's debts were manifold. He is the subject of one of his short papers, and echoes of his great sermons—not Binney's, as Robertson Nicoll supposed—may perhaps be heard in the preaching of Thomas Bradshaw in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*.

But these are minor matters ; in all the essential things Mr. Massingham's judgement is sound and true, whilst his praise is warm enough to satisfy the most ardent of Mark Rutherford's admirers. Years ago he prophesied that when the tale of the great Victorian writers is made up 'Mark Rutherford's name, like Ben Adhem's will lead all the rest.' Here he speaks of him as the one imaginative genius of the highest order which English Puritanism has produced since Bunyan. Some who remember the story of Mark Rutherford's life, and how he discarded the beliefs in which he was brought up, may hesitate about the association with Puritanism. Nevertheless Mr. Massingham is right : Mark Rutherford's breach with orthodoxy left his deepest self untouched ; every fibre of his being was stained through with the

Puritan dye. Take for example a characteristic passage like this :

The shallowest of mortals is able now to laugh at the notion of a personal devil. No doubt there is no such thing existent ; but the horror at evil which could find no other expression than in the creation of a devil is no subject for laughter, and if it do not in some shape or other survive, the race itself will not survive. No religion, so far as I know, has dwelt like Christianity with such profound earnestness on the bisection of man—on the distinction within him, vital to the very last degree, between the higher and the lower, heaven and hell.

We see the same thing in his passionate devotion to the study of the Bible. This, again, was one of the good gifts which he owed to his friend Caleb Morris. Once, in his old age, Robertson Nicoll tells us, at a meeting of a few literary friends, their host, Mr. Watts-Dunton, asked Mark Rutherford if he had read Kipling. 'No,' was the reply ; 'I am getting to be an old man now, and I read my Bible.' And so, naturally, when he wrote his novels it was to the life of Puritan England, which he knew so well, both in its weakness and its strength, that he turned for his subjects. It was, as Mr. Massingham says, 'into this middle territory of small farmers and merchants, traders, shopkeepers, carriers, grouped for the most part in the close family of the Independent or Baptist or Methodist chapel,' that Mark Rutherford thrust his ploughshare. While Dickens only knew enough of Dissent to caricature it, and thought that he had sufficiently described a Dissenting minister 'by calling him a hypocrite and ascribing to him a tendency to excess in muffins or

pineapple rum,' Mark Rutherford, says Mr. Massingham—though in this he seems a little less than fair to the creator of *Dinah Morris* and *Rufus Lyon* — is the only great modern English writer sufficiently interested in provincial Dissent, and knowing enough about it, to give it a serious place in fiction, and to test its quality in a series of illuminating studies of its middle and later social types.'





II

THE PULPIT



## I

### IS PREACHING WORTH WHILE ?

IN Dr. W. J. Dawson's recent book, *The Autobiography of a Mind*, the writer, speaking of his work as a preacher, says :

I could not persuade myself that any results I might achieve were commensurate with my intention. I was human enough to be gratified by popularity ; it afforded some kind of proof that I was not altogether mistaken in my vocation ; but I saw with disastrous clarity how little it was really worth. Youth might be benignantly attracted by one's words, but on the set thoughts and ideals of middle-age spoken words were no more than the rattling of raindrops on a roof which sheds them instantly.

' How little is it really worth '—that is an estimate of the work of the pulpit which one expects from the cynical outsider : ' He who can does ; he who can't preaches.' And sometimes, as this extract shows, the mocking voice finds an echo within the Church and among ourselves. In George Herbert's church, Izaak Walton tells us, he had the reading-desk and the pulpit made of the same height and placed side by side, ' that they should neither have a precedence or priority of the other ; but that prayer and preaching, being equally useful, might agree like brethren and have an equal honour and estimation.'

But there are many to-day who would withhold from preaching this 'equal honour and estimation,' and even on Free Church lips we sometimes hear the false and meaningless distinction between going to church to worship and going to church to hear a sermon, as if listening to the will and word of God, which it is the business of the sermon to declare, were not part of the act of worship! So that it is, perhaps, little wonder if sometimes the preacher himself yields to the evil mood and begins to think that all his words are as idle as the chattering of sparrows or the rattle of raindrops on the roof. Nevertheless, it is an evil mood; how can we meet and resist it?

Let us begin with the appeal to history, and at once we see, with the most reassuring clarity, how very much preaching has been worth. It was preaching that founded the Church, and it is preaching which again and again, in its periods of flatness and failure, has revived and restored it. Listen to the apostolic argument: 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. . . . How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' For St. Paul everything hangs, in the last resort, on the human messenger. In Dr. H. B. Workman's great work on John Wyclif, recently issued by the Oxford Press, we read, 'In Wyclif's eyes preaching was the most important duty of the clergy.' The two great instruments by which he laboured to effect the revival of religion,

especially among the lower classes, were 'the restoration of simple preaching and the distribution to the people of the word of God in their mother-tongue.' Another new book—Dr. James Moffatt's *Golden Book of Tillotson*—also illustrates, though from a quite different angle, the power of the pulpit. Tillotson was one of a group of great London preachers in the latter part of the seventeenth century whose sermons 'formed opinion and moulded conduct' and 'more than counteracted the Romanizing policy of the Court.' Still more convincing is the witness of the century that followed. Wesley was great in many ways—as organizer, hymn-writer, controversialist, correspondent—but the chief instrument of the Evangelical Revival was Wesley the preacher. In him, and in the movement which he represents, Christianity, it has been rightly said, simply reverted to its first and greatest instrument of power. And to-day, for all that the cynics say, bears the same witness. We are told that the day of the pulpit is past, and then, as Phillips Brooks puts it, 'some morning the voice of the true preacher is heard in the land and all the streets are full of men crowding to hear him, just exactly as were the streets of Constantinople when Chrysostom was going to preach in the Church of the Apostles, or the streets of London when Latimer was bravely telling his truth at St. Paul's.'

And have we not all experiences of our own, whether as preachers or hearers, to confirm the witness of the past? A few Sunday evenings ago

I listened to a brief address on prayer broadcast from the London studio. The speaker was unknown to me ; I could not see him ; only by the thin wire of the spoken word could his message come to me ; but it came—simple, familiar, tender, and yet so searching because so real and I thanked God for it. It was said of Spurgeon that he never stood up to speak to his vast congregation without remembering that, as he spoke, lives might be changed for ever. ‘A word did it,’ Savonarola used to say about his own conversion—a word from the sermon of an Augustinian friar, though what the word was his closest friend never knew. How often has it been so—‘a word did it’—and yet we dare to say that preaching is not worth while !

Every preacher, I imagine, keeps a little private drawer in which he hides a few letters that have come to him through the years. Many of them are from strangers whom he has never seen and never will see. He does not show them to others : they are for his own eye alone. And sometimes, when his light is low and he is tempted to think that he has spent his strength for naught, he turns to that tiny sheaf of fading papers. There is nothing in them that can make him vain ; it might have been so once, but not now. As he reads he is both humbled and heartened, and he asks God to forgive him that he ever dared to think that preaching—even his preaching—is not worth while.



## II

### IS MODERN PREACHING TOO QUIET?

I CAME the other day across this criticism of John Bright as a speaker by Matthew Arnold: 'He is an orator of almost the highest rank—voice and manner excellent; perhaps not quite flow enough—not that he halts or stammers, but I like to have sometimes more of a rush than he ever gives you.' Then, by way of contrast, I recalled Lord Morley's striking description of Gladstone's oratory during his famous Midlothian campaign: 'He bore his hearers through long chains of strenuous periods, calling up by the marvellous transformations of his mien a strange succession of images—as if he were now a keen hunter, now some eager bird of prey, now a charioteer of fiery steeds kept well in hand, and now and again we seemed to hear the pity or dark wrath of a prophet, with the mighty rushing wind and the fire running along the ground.' The two men represented, of course, two widely different types of public speaking between which I make no attempt to judge. But Morley's description, taken together with Arnold's criticism, suggests a question which pulpit and pew alike might do well to consider: Are we not in danger of growing a race of preachers who are too quiet?

I hope I shall not be misunderstood. 'I had a delightful Sunday at ——,' writes Dr. John Brown, in one of his sparkling letters, 'a strong, old-fashioned Baptist sermon in a little church in the wood, the text "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me"—

only the man roared and vociferated. It was like the sharp, shattering discharge of a Calvinistic mitrailleuse in your face.' That is a type of preacher who is now well-nigh extinct among us ; and none of us, I imagine, would welcome his return. He still survives in America, where the explosive type of oratory is more in favour than with us. I remember once listening to a temperance speaker in Nashville, Tennessee. The platform from which he spoke was fully fifty or sixty feet wide. Before he finished he used the whole of it. That is not our way, and, certainly, I am not suggesting that it ought to be. Nor am I confounding passion with mere noise or superabundant gesture. I hold no brief for the dull souls who can feel no heat unless they see showers of sparks. To some readers Butler's *Analogy* is the coldest, most passionless book ever penned ; I know at least one discerning reader who thinks it one of the most heated books in the English language. Passion takes on many forms and speaks with many voices. There is passion in the rainbow-coloured reverie of Jeremy Taylor, and in the white art of John Henry Newman, in the raging, roaring flame of Whitefield, and in the still, soundless heat of Wesley.

Nevertheless, when all this and much else has been fully allowed for, it is, I believe, still true that the pulpit to-day is suffering from an excess of self-restraint. If a dainty and fastidious man of letters like Matthew Arnold found even John Bright wanting in 'rush,' is it not probable that the average worshipper would be more readily impressed if the

preacher were not so unwilling to let himself go? Of course there will always be quiet souls in the pulpit, and I am not suggesting anything so absurd as that a man should do violence to himself by assuming a manner that is wholly foreign to his nature, and which would quite certainly be as unimpressive as unreal things always are. But is there not an insincerity of repression as well as of expression? If God has given to a man a rich, full, emotional nature, why should he put it into chains and cultivate an icy self-restraint which is as unnatural in him as a greater demonstrativeness would be in another? By all means let us be ourselves, in the pulpit or out of it, but, for heaven's sake, let us not pinch and squeeze ourselves to fit the foolish fancy of the religious modistes who would tie us all up in hobble skirts and frown down fervour in the pulpit as 'bad form.'

I am not suggesting, for I do not believe, that preachers to-day are not in earnest about their message. Where perhaps we do sometimes fail—I should be glad to know how our intelligent laity think about the matter—is that we are afraid of letting it appear that we are in earnest; our preaching is too dry-eyed; there is no red blood visible under the skin. And so, quite unjustly to ourselves, we convey the impression that what we are saying does not greatly matter. After all, nothing is so 'catching' as an honest enthusiasm, and, other things being equal, it is the man who is himself greatly moved and is not ashamed to let it be seen who will greatly move others. Nor let anyone

think that this is merely a matter of taste, good or bad. It goes to the very roots of the preacher's business. In speaking it is not simply thought that has to be communicated, it is vital force; and the medium for that is not words alone, but the whole man. And perhaps one chief reason for the comparative failure of some of the most gifted speakers lies in the depressed and devitalized personality through which the truth is offered to men.

### III

#### IMPERSONAL PREACHING

PROPERLY speaking there is no such thing; the phrase is a contradiction in terms. Preaching, Phillips Brooks has taught us, in what is perhaps the best definition of the subject ever framed, is the communication of truth through personality. Let either of these two elements be lacking, and what remains is not preaching. And yet, I suppose, we have all listened to sermons in which one of these essentials—the personal factor—has somehow been reduced almost to the vanishing-point. We might have no quarrel either with the thing said, or with the way of saying it; but it left us unmoved, because the man himself was not in it; there was no sense of one soul communicating itself to another soul; the word came to us cold, detached, impersonal. I remember years ago listening to a preacher in the

Lake District. The room in which we were met was small, and the company was small ; in a physical sense the preacher was not far from any one of us ; yet never once did he seem to get into touch with us ; there was throughout a sense of aloofness and remoteness which is very difficult to describe, but the chill of which I can feel even yet. May I recall another experience ? In another part of the country I listened on several occasions to a preacher whose sermons were of an unusually high order ; they were well prepared, the material and phrasing alike were good, and the delivery was forceful. And yet I was not impressed by them as I felt I ought to be, and at first I was perplexed to understand why. Now I know : it was impersonal preaching. For one thing, the eyes of the preacher never met ours. He spoke like a man unconscious of his congregation, until at last I came to feel that he might have preached almost as well if there had been no congregation there at all. But that is not preaching. A story is told of a child who was taken by his mother to hear Spurgeon. After he had been listening for a while, the boy whispered, ‘ Mother, is Mr. Spurgeon speaking to me ? ’ And there is no true preaching where that sense of immediacy, of soul in touch with soul, is wholly wanting.

It is remarkable what apparent trifles will sometimes suffice to muffle and dull the personal note in preaching. Lecturers on homiletics, I believe, are wont to warn the beginner against a too frequent use in the pulpit of the first person pronoun singular ; and the beginner will do well to give heed to the

warning. A strident egotism is always offensive, and never more so than when it lifts up its voice in the Christian pulpit. But there is another side to the subject. When I was a boy, a preacher would say 'we'—I am not sure that all preachers are cured of the bad habit yet—when he only meant 'I,' and when it would have been perfectly natural and proper to say 'I'; with the result that there was left, even on a child's mind, a sense of something pompous and unreal. When the speech of the pulpit is, what it ought to always be, as natural and simple as the speech of daily life, 'I' will find its place there, and it is sheer affectation to try to keep it out. Look at the Epistles of St. Paul. The Apostle was no chattering egotist; yet the personal note dominates his letters throughout. 'If anybody thinks that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews' Henry Ward Beecher once said, 'let him count the "I's" in it.' And how much we should miss, how much feebler to our touch would the pulse-beats of that strong, vibrant soul seem if he had not dared thus boldly to speak of himself! And for the preacher who knows how rightly to use it, that is the right example still.

The need of keeping unimpaired the personal factor in preaching should go far toward settling another question which is often discussed by pew and pulpit alike: should a preacher read his sermon, or speak from notes, or dispense with written aids altogether? My own theory is very simple. What matters is not what a man takes with him into the pulpit, be it much, or little, or nothing; what matters



is that he and not it be the master. I have known a man read his sermon from end to end, and yet so put himself into it, and pass himself through it, that the manuscript, so far from coming between him and his hearers, became in every word of it the glowing medium of his own spiritual passion. But that is a comparatively rare achievement. The trouble with the read sermon—and so far, therefore, its condemnation—is that it so often destroys in the mind of the hearer that sense of immediacy which is essential for really effective preaching; it depersonalizes the word, and turns what should be a sermon into an essay.

But the true secret of that communication of truth through personality which is preaching lies much deeper than any matters of this kind. 'I delivered unto you,' Paul told the Corinthians, 'that which also I received.' It is always so; nothing can be 'delivered' that has not first been 'received'; we reach other men's souls only through our own personal discoveries. 'The poet,' says Sir Walter Raleigh, in his golden little book on Wordsworth, 'so far as he is a poet, accepts nothing on authority. The truths that he discovers have been discovered by many before him, but what makes them worth the communicating is that now he has discovered them again, reaching them, it may be, by a new track, but in any case by his own efforts, so that they come to him as the crown of his own labours, and the fruit of his own sorrows, and struggles, and joys.' For 'poet' read 'preacher,' and the word is equally valid. 'The gospel which I preach,' I once heard

John McNeill, the Scottish evangelist, say, 'is the gospel according to John.' And this is the main point of what I mean when I say that true preaching is always personal; it is the telling to others of 'that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life.' The rest is all but leather and prunella.

## IV

## 'PAINFUL' PREACHING

I HAVE been reading, sometimes with dissent but always with delight, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's volume of Cambridge lectures, *Studies in Literature*, Second Series, and one of his sayings will serve as a convenient text for my own little homily. In a brief paragraph on Byron's defects as a writer he complains of what he calls Byron's 'careless fluidity.' 'In plain words,' he says—and this is, as the preachers say, 'our text'—'Byron did not take enough trouble.' With the justice of this as a criticism of Byron I am not now concerned. I am not thinking of poets but of preachers, and however it may be with the poets it is certainly true of the preachers—and it is one chief cause of our ineffectiveness—that we do not take trouble enough.

I have been much interested in a letter which I have recently received from a young Canadian friend who, though he has written a scientific thesis

on ‘*The Determination of the Direction of a Straight Line*,’ makes no pretence to be a bookman. ‘What is it in writing,’ he asks, ‘which make that difference in reading that perhaps the “only-occasional” reader experiences most acutely, that difference in the relation of the reader’s and writer’s minds—the reader either “right with” the writer or sadly dragging behind him—experienced, for instance, by *this* “only-occasional” reader on the one hand when he picks up anything by —, and on the other when he reads —?’ How awkwardly some people, and I, say things. They seem to think in detours and expect their readers to find their way after them with as much ease and pleasure as if they travelled in a definite direction. I think,’ he goes on—and here the subject of his thesis has moulded his imagery—‘it would help some writers if they would compare the simplicity of motion in a straight line with the complex array of counter-centrifugal forces required to maintain successful motion round curves.’ *Mutatis mutandis*, is not this how the pew sometimes feels about the pulpit? And does not the explanation lie where Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch finds the explanation of Byron’s slipshod poetry—we do not take trouble enough? In other words, we want more ‘painful’ preaching; ‘painful’ that is, in the older sense of the word, not of causing pain but of taking pains. And doubtless, as Archbishop Trench rather acidly remarks, if there were more ‘painful’ preachers in the sense in which the seventeenth century used the word there would be fewer in the sense in which we use it. I want to

urge the plea for greater pulpit 'painfulness' on two grounds.

First, in the interests of brevity. To know how to be brief and yet not meagre is now one of the stern necessities of the preacher's calling. We may resent it ; we may sigh for the spacious days of old, when the man in the pulpit could turn the hour-glass and still hold on his triumphant way ; we may wax scornful of a generation that refuses to listen to its prophets for more than twenty-five or thirty minutes at a time, and we may declare, as did one impatient and epigrammatic divine, that ' a Christianity of short sermons is a Christianity of short fibre.' But all will be of no avail. For better or for worse the day of the long sermon has gone, and for preachers to wish it back again is only a particularly foolish form of crying for the moon. What we must do is to accept the conditions which we have all helped to fashion and make the best of them. And this means, among other things, that we must learn to be brief, terse, compact. I have heard of an editor who sent back a contributor's manuscript with this laconic comment : ' Too long ; reduce by half, and leave nothing out.' That is our task, and it is sometimes a ' painful ' one in both senses of the word. Our much talking tends naturally to diffuseness—a diffuseness for which hard work is the only cure. As every preacher knows, it is when we are least prepared that we are wont to be most wordy, taking two sentences to say what might have been better said in one. So that it all comes back to this, that in order to be fewer minutes in the pulpit and yet

‘leave nothing out’ we must be more hours in the study.

Secondly, in the interests of simplicity. ‘Is not clearness,’ Sir William Robertson Nicoll once asked, ‘the imperative demand of the reading public? I have by my side,’ he went on, ‘an imposing array of Meredith’s works, and they are surely a marvellous evidence of genius and labour, incessant, untiring, unencouraged. But whether this generation is going to spend evenings in reading the more obscure of Meredith’s works I really do not know.’ I beg pardon, but I think he did. A few Meredith enthusiasts may be willing to sit with wet towels round their heads trying to make out their master’s meaning, but for the most part the reading public will turn elsewhere. And if clearness is necessary in a writer it is even more so in a speaker. ‘Clearness, in particular,’ said Wesley to his helpers, ‘is necessary for you and me.’ But what a beginner so often fails to realize is that in order to be clear a man must take pains. Simplicity is not only a natural gift, it is an acquired art, one of those good things which, according to Leonardo da Vinci’s great saying, God sells only at the price of labour. Yet surely no toil is too great that will ensure swift and easy access to the minds of those whom we seek to serve.

Sir J. M. Barrie, speaking not long ago to a company of dramatic critics about his plays, said: ‘I wish I could write mine better, and I presume I am revealing no secrets when I tell you that the only reason I don’t is because I can’t. If there were

any other reason I should deserve the contempt of every one of you.' When all preachers can honestly say that of their sermons there will be fewer folk asking ' what's wrong with the Church ? '

## V

## THE PULPIT SCOLD

' I LEFT church the other Sunday,' writes a church-goer, ' with my ears ringing and my mind rather disquieted. Our clergyman had been denouncing us for the sin of anger, religious or irreligious anger, and he did it in an angry, quarrelsome tone. His text was : " Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath : for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." But there was very little of " my beloved brethren " in the discourse, and I felt, not bitterly, I hope, how easy it is for a preacher to fall into the scolding vein and so to defeat his own ends.' A like complaint was made by William Cowper to John Newton about Thomas Scott, Newton's successor at Olney :

Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and, had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended ;



but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teases away his hearers.

These are words in season from the point of view of the pew which the pulpit would do well to lay to heart. It may, of course, be said that denunciation is a part of the prophet's task, that in all ages the Lord's prophets, from the least unto the greatest, have appeared lash in hand: 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed'; 'Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'; 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' Nevertheless, the preacher has need to be very sure of himself who assumes that rôle to-day; 'prophetic' is indeed a word of royal lineage, but it has been often used to veil a strangely mean and pitiful spirit.

To begin with, it should be remembered, denunciation in all its forms—whether sarcasm and invective, or mere fault-finding and scolding—is physic, not food. Now physick may be useful, and sometimes it may be necessary, but it remains still physick and not food. We all remember Mrs. Poyser's description of the two parsons of Hayslope: 'She said Mr. Irwine was like a good meal o' victual, you wer the better for him without thinking on it, and Mr. Ryde was like a dose o' physick, he gripped you and worreted you, and after all he left you much the same'—a saying with that air of finality about it which was characteristic of Mrs. Poyser whenever she managed to 'have her say out.'

Again, it is doubtful if mere condemnation, however vehement, ever really attains its end. Suppose a preacher wishes to controvert some popular doctrine which he believes to be both false and harmful, how may he best achieve his purpose? He may treat the doctrine as a foe to be beaten and broken; he may bring to bear upon it all the resources of his irony and wit; and since in encounters of this kind the enemy's guns never get a chance, the end of the sermon leaves the preacher the undisputed master of the field. But if it be true that that which gives to error its power is the truth which somewhere or other is lodged within it, 'victories' of this kind accomplish nothing. Similarly, it is doubtful if much comes of our scourging of other men's follies and vices. The trouble is the lash so often falls on the wrong shoulders. A few sensitive souls wince under the stroke, but those who deserve it most only glance across at their neighbour's pew and think, as they listen to the prophet's rebuke, 'He is the man!'

But the real condemnation of the fault-finding type of preaching is that it shifts the emphasis in religion from grace to law, from God to man. Exactly what is meant by this it is impossible adequately to explain in a dozen lines, and in any case this is hardly the place in which to make the explanation. But this I may say even at the risk, through brevity, of being misunderstood. There is always a certain miserable satisfaction, sometimes even a certain glow of moral self-complacency, from which the preacher is no more immune than other men, in playing the

part of moral censor, laying down the law for others, telling them what they may do and what they may not do. But this is a temper which is separated by a whole diameter from the temper of the New Testament. We are preachers of the Gospel, and gospel, it cannot too often be insisted, means not good advice but good news—good news of which we are the heralds ; and any man who finds greater joy and freedom in declaring the law than the Gospel, the doing and duty of man than the giving and grace of God, may well begin to doubt if he has read his commission aright. Christian preaching has, undoubtedly, its minatory side, as Christ's own ministry makes plain, but no man is ready to reveal it until he has seen it as part of a larger and diviner whole.

## VI

## CONCERNING JARGON

IN an essay which I wrote a short time ago I made a passing reference to what I called ' the jargon of the Holiness Convention.' The phrase was not, perhaps, very gracious, but it was certainly not meant to be offensive. I thought it was a pretty generally recognized fact that religious people, like the rest of mankind, whether scientists or sportsmen, politicians or cowkeepers, occasionally make use of jargon. Nevertheless, I was roundly taken to task and told that I was guilty of sneering at the godly. What, then, is jargon?

From one point of view, the most entertaining account of it that I know is to be found in one of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's brilliant lectures on *The Art of Writing*, in which he pokes inimitable fun at the unhappy people, in Parliament, the press, the pulpit, who are unable to say a plain thing in a plain way, who habitually choose 'vague, woolly, abstract nouns rather than concrete ones,' who never get to the point by the straight, short path so long as a roundabout way lies open to them. Writers and speakers of this sort, for example—this is one of Sir Arthur's illustrations—if they wish to tell us that a man was carried home drunk, will say that 'he was conveyed to his place of residence in an intoxicated condition.' 'The Rehearsal,' said Dr. Johnson—the illustration this time is Macaulay's—'has not wit enough to keep it sweet; that is,' he continued, by way of correcting the sentence, but really spoiling it, 'it has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction.'

But it is not jargon of this kind of which at the moment I am thinking, much as many of us need the warning against it. I find in my dictionary this definition of the word: 'Any phraseology peculiar to a sect, profession, or the like; professional slang; as, "the jargon of the schools."' It was in this sense that I used the word in the offending phrase that I have already quoted; and no one, I imagine, will deny that in this sense religious people are continually talking jargon. Indeed, those of us who belong to 'the people called Methodists' are often chaffed about the tenacity with which we cling to an

odd dialect which is hardly intelligible to the uninitiated. When I was a boy it was no uncommon thing for announcement to be made—I have seen a similar notice outside a Manchester church quite recently—that on a coming Sunday the Rev. ——— would preach ‘all day,’ when all that was meant was that he would conduct both the morning and evening services. One such announcement once fell into the genial hands of Mr. *Punch*: quoth he, ‘What insatiable people these Methodists are!’ Things of this kind, are, of course, harmless enough; but it is a more serious matter when the preacher carries the jargon of his theology, or his philosophy, or, what is more likely at the present moment, of his psychology, into the pulpit with him. Words like Christology, soteriology, eschatology, and so on, have their place in the textbook and the classroom, but not in the church where humble folk are met for worship. The preacher who prayed, ‘O Lord, appear in all Thy eschatological glory,’ was talking jargon pure and simple. Dr. A. B. Davidson once rebuked, in his dry and caustic fashion, a fellow-Scot, the translator of a work on ‘Messianic Prophecy,’ for his too great partiality to the use of the technical terms of philosophy. ‘There is no doubt,’ he said, ‘that the language which “wives and wabsters” speak is capable of expressing everything which any reasonable man can desire to say to his fellows.’

So far, probably, we are of one mind. Can I carry my readers with me when I go on to say that even the phraseology of the New Testament may not be

always the best for our purpose to-day, that we may use even it and still only be talking jargon ? For the sake of the truth of the Gospel it may be necessary to set aside some of the language in which the Gospel was first interpreted to men. It has been pointed out how responsive Paul was to ' the varying thought-currents of his environment,' and how ready ' to employ any categories that helped to make his meaning intelligible to different circles of readers. Having to appeal to both Jews and Greeks, he tried to speak the language of both.' And it is for us to-day to use whatever forms of speech will most adequately and vividly bring home to men the vital facts of Christian experience. We are not tied to terms like justification, regeneration, sanctification, and so on ; perhaps the less we make use of them the better ; we must translate the realities which underlie them into language which will appeal to the mind of our own generation. One example will illustrate what I mean. Our Evangelical forefathers, taking their stand on several familiar ' texts,' had much to say about ' the blood of Christ ' ; occasionally in their sermons and in their favourite hymns they used the imagery with a daring which their children to-day find it impossible to imitate. Now many modern Evangelicals will not sing hymns of this kind. If a preacher or anyone else begins to talk glibly about the ' blood,' something in them shuts up and refuses to listen. It is not silly squeamishness, still less is it an inability to realize what the death of Christ means ; it is simply that symbolism that once seemed adequate, or at least



fitting, is for many now no longer so ; we must find new channels through which the ancient river of God's truth may flow.

## VII

## 'SPEECH EASY TO BE UNDERSTOOD'—

THOSE who were present at the great 'Copec' gatherings in Birmingham may remember the merriment that was created by the Marquis of Tavistock, who, after quoting from one of the reports a sentence that was stiff with long and technical terms, counselled the ministers—parodying a line from a well-known Canadian patriotic song—to make it their prayer, 'God who made me simple, make me simpler yet !' The word, spoken half in jest, deserved to be taken wholly in earnest. Those of us who teach religion, whether in the classroom or the pulpit, cannot too often remind ourselves that, if our word is to 'get home,' we must translate our worn, conventional phraseology into the speech of common life. In two of the latest books addressed to ministers I am glad to see this point insisted upon with some emphasis. One of them is by a Presbyterian, the Rev. A. J. Gossip, the author of one of the most striking volumes of sermons of recent years. In his 'Warrack Lectures on Preaching' for 1925—*In Christ's Stead*—Mr. Gossip says :

We must speak in English, and not in a kind of bastard speech, a weird religious jargon that means very little to

the ordinary mind. No words ossify so quickly into meaningless things that make really no impression on the hearers' minds as religious phraseology. I should say that to talk in a sermon about eschatology is in itself a proof of incompetence. Many a devout soul will be upon the right hand at the last who has no idea of what you mean. And after all you can say what you are trying to say much better in plain, ordinary words. Always eliminate terms like justification, and take the trouble to translate that which now rushes past the ear, like a mere empty wind, into the thought that lies behind it.

An Anglican, the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, writes to the same effect in his sparkling little book *The Human Parson* :

The preacher must talk in a language that the people can understand. The current pulpit phraseology of religion is bankrupt. By this I mean it is impossible to trade with ; I am not denying its worth in the science of theology, but in daily life its purchasing power is almost nil. Words like ' Sanctification,' ' Justification,' ' Mediation,' and even phrases like ' the Blood of the Lamb ' or ' the Holy Ghost ' mean no doubt a great deal to those who use them from the pulpit, but they are not understood by the majority of those who are listening. I am not suggesting that these words and phrases should not be retained where theologians meet together, but that they should be used sparingly in the pulpit, and that even then they should be accompanied with some simple statement as to what they really mean.

To some of the theologically minded this may seem a hard saying which they are not able to receive : the truth of the matter is in it, nevertheless. It is said that the Principal of Mansfield College once sent some working men to hear a well-known London preacher, and asked them afterwards what they thought of it. ' Blowed if we could understand a

word of what the bloke was saying,’ was their comment. And to an extent to which probably few of us realize, the language of our creeds, our sermons, and even of our hymns is now an unknown tongue to which the average man can attach no intelligible meaning. To tell men and women that in order to be Christians they must be ‘born again’ is to tell them nothing; we must say it again, but in another language. Not long ago I saw, outside a London church, these words in large letters: ‘They overcame by the blood.’ For any real meaning they could convey to the average passer-by, might they not almost as well have been written in Greek or Hebrew? Language of this kind is now a leaky vessel which can hold no water; we must find new vessels; the old phrases must be retranslated.

This does not mean either that the pulpit must give up the attempt to teach Christian doctrine or that when it teaches it must lapse into the slang of the streets. Mr. Studdert Kennedy is perhaps one of the greatest of living preachers; he is great because one hears in him what we so often listen for in vain—the authentic note of the prophet of God. But to say that is not to endorse all the ways of the prophet, and nothing could be more foolish or futile than for young preachers to try to wear his mantle and to speak with his accent. Mr. Kennedy is seeking to rouse men to the reality of the things which we are all courteously supposed to believe, and since to dose them with the drowsy syrups of our dead yesterdays would only be to plunge them in yet

deeper sleep, he has set himself with a certain Puckish daring to concoct new draughts of his own. But though we may have little liking for some of his methods, and still less desire to imitate them, we ought to show ourselves no less resolved than he to tell God's truth about man in such fashion that once again the common people will hear it gladly. That last word takes us back to Jesus and His way of teaching. 'How easy and straightforward,' says Dr. Glover, 'His language is! To-day we all use abstract nouns to convey our meaning; we cannot do without words ending in -ality and -ation. But there is no recorded saying of Jesus where He uses even "personality." He does not use abstract nouns. He sticks to plain words. When He speaks about God He does not say "the Great First Cause," or "Providence," or any other vague abstract. He says "your Heavenly Father." He does not talk of "humanity"; He says "your brethren." He has no jargon, no technical terms, no scholastic vocabulary.'

I put at the head of this paper a phrase of St. Paul's. I will conclude with the verse from which it is taken; it should be hung in a place where every maker of sermons can read it: 'If the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war? So also ye, unless ye utter by the tongue speech easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye will be speaking into the air.'

## VIII

### 'THE TAKING GIFT OF UNCTION'

THE phrase is Lord Morley's. Writing in his *Recollections* of his Oxford days, he says: 'Seldom did I miss a sermon of the Bishop's at St. Mary's, for Wilberforce excelled any man I ever heard in the taking gift of unction. For this I must confess an irresistible weakness. The only rival within my experience, unless it were Guthrie at Edinburgh, was Spurgeon in South London; he had a glorious voice, unquestioning faith, full and ready knowledge of apt texts of the Bible, and a deep earnest desire to reach the hearts of congregations who were just as earnest in response.'

What is unction? According to the *Imperial Dictionary* it is 'that quality in language, tone of expression, mode of address, manner, and the like, which excites strong devotion, fervour, tenderness, sympathy, and the like; that which melts to religious fervour and tenderness.' Perhaps this is as much as any dictionary can do for us in defining what is perhaps incapable of definition. It is easier to say what unction is not than what it is. As Vinet well says, it shows itself less by external signs than by the impression which others receive. It is not emotion, though emotion accompanies it. Still less has it to do with mere cleverness: '*Esprit* is fatal to unction; no man can give at once the impression that he himself is clever and that Christ is mighty to save.' Least of all has it to do with the nauseous sentimentalism, that 'holy, oily' compound, which

we call unctuousity. 'No material guarantee of it can either be given or taken. No human ordination can confer it; no place in a historical succession, however august or venerable, has anything whatever to do with it.'

But unction is better explained by examples than by definitions. Lord Morley gives us three. The reference to Wilberforce, I confess, I was not prepared for. I am not old enough to have heard him preach, and what I have learned of him in other ways has left impressions of a different and less pleasing kind. Guthrie's place in the trio will surprise nobody at least who has any acquaintance with Guthrie's city. The people of Edinburgh have done the right thing of late by the erection in Princes Street of a noble statue to the great preacher's memory. But to understand what unction means a man should have heard Spurgeon. If he never had that privilege he should at least read some of his published sermons. A new volume of them (*Able to the Uttermost*) has just reached me. In sending it forth its publishers point out that from 1855 to 1917 the regular issue of a weekly sermon by Spurgeon never ceased; even then the end came not because the material was exhausted, but on account of difficulties arising out of the war. The volume now issued has been prepared from manuscripts not one of which has been published before. They say further that though now thirty years have passed since Spurgeon's death his sermons still continue to sell in larger numbers than those of the most popular preachers of the present day. Is not this a record



wholly without parallel in the long history of the Christian Church ?

Of course it is easy to criticize Spurgeon. There are things in this latest volume that will make the reader squirm or smile according to his mood. But surely even the most dashing of our young moderns should be able to see that sermons with a history like Spurgeon’s are not accounted for when you have pointed out their impossible exegesis, their obsolete theology, and their occasional touches of Protestant fierceness. It would be more profitable, instead of dwelling on these things, to try to discover the secret of their marvellous influence. I am not so foolish as to think that I can expound it in a paragraph, but there are one or two things that may perhaps put us on the track of it.

Of his matchless voice, his royal dower of speech, his rich and sunny humanity, there is no need to speak. With these there went a passion of personal conviction which the years never dulled. In one of the sermons just published he says : ‘ I can say very simply, very plainly—you have no difficulty in understanding what I have to tell you—and I may say also very affectionately and earnestly that my heart goes—I am no deceiver in that respect—with every word I say.’ But, indeed, there was no need for Spurgeon to say that ; nobody could listen to him and doubt it. Dr. Martineau, it is said, was not unfrequently in his congregation. When someone expressed surprise at his being there and added : ‘ You don’t believe what he says,’ Martineau replied with quiet significance : ‘ No, but he does.’ And

how he gloried in the gospel he was sent to preach ! There may not have been many bells in his chime, but what music he brought out of them ! Men no more tired of it than they tire of the familiar sound of the bells of their village home. Moreover, Spurgeon kept to the end what preachers so often lose—his sense of the wonder and greatness of the Christian Gospel. He was not content to skirt the pleasant shores of revelation ; he plunged in to its deep valleys and gazed upon its lonely peaks, until the mystery and immensity of the land seized and subdued his soul. To him the gospel was simply the most wonderful thing in the world, and every time he stood up to preach it the wonder of it all seemed born anew within him. That any man should reject it filled him with astonishment, but that any man could receive it as a mere matter of course was to him a thing unthinkable. Perhaps it is the union of gifts and graces such as these that constitutes that 'taking gift of unction' which Lord Morley, in common with so many more, have found in the preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

III

THE FAITH

The article opposite makes a good point but the position which I. S. puts forward as representing Newman's views on faith is a very partial one. It may be that in the sermon in question Newman stresses the one point (as he has apt to everywhere in particular sermons or even in such sermons, sometimes rather in contradiction to what he might say in another sermon) - but his writing on faith was much profounder and nearer to what a true churchman would say than appears here. See his sermons on faith and reason published as Theology of Religion (1843). Collected in Chadwick's Mind of the Oxford Movement p. 71.

# I

## THE FREEDOM OF FAITH

I SET myself a little time ago the pleasant task of reading through the eight volumes of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. In one of them which I have just read he speaks of the faith of the Gospel as 'a definite deposit, a treasure common to all, one and the same in every age, conceived in set words, and such as admits of being received, preserved, transmitted.' The duty of the Christian is reverently to accept the doctrinal truths which have come down to him, holding fast even 'the primitive wording of them.' 'Blessed be God!' the preacher cries, 'we have not to find the truth, it is put into our hands; we have but to commit it to our hearts, to preserve it inviolate, and to deliver it over to our posterity.'

This is an attitude of mind which has, I suppose, its representatives in all the Churches. They dwell much upon what is called 'the faith of our fathers'; they will allow no restatement of belief which involves a break with 'historical Christianity'; they are specially sensitive about any suggested change in the language of the ancient Creeds of the Church. Those in whom this way of thinking is sufficiently determined it not infrequently carries where it carried Newman—into the Roman Catholic Church. Nor will it be forgotten that this conception of the

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Gospel as a sacred deposit to be jealously guarded and transmitted has its place in the New Testament. The later writings speak frequently of faith in the objective sense—faith, that is to say, which is not the trust of the individual but the formulated creed of the community; 'the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.' And, of course, this appeal to the past is of abiding validity. No sane man can ignore 'historical Christianity,' or be indifferent to the faith of his fathers. To forget the past is to lose one of our wisest guides amid the perplexities of the present.

Nevertheless, many of us at least will feel that Newman's words strike the wrong note. If it were true, as he says, that we have not to find the truth, that it is put into our hands, we certainly should not feel that it was anything to bless God for. Reverting to the distinction which has just been made, it may be said that 'faith' is more vital to religion than 'the faith.' 'Faith' is something which is my own, the response of my own soul to its living Lord; 'the faith' is another man's, something which has been handed down and which I have received. The former, as every reader of the New Testament knows, is St. Paul's great word, and the way in which in the Pastoral Epistles his sense of it is overgrown by the later, objective sense is one of several reasons which have led many scholars to doubt their Pauline authorship. As Dr. Denney epigrammatically puts it, 'St. Paul was inspired, but the writer of these epistles is sometimes only orthodox.' In other words, he is thinking more



about 'the faith' than about 'faith.' But this is to descend to a lower if more accessible height ; it marks the beginning of the process which has so often set the Creeds above the Christ. 'It was said to them of old time ——'; there is the voice of tradition. 'I say unto you ——'; there is the voice of the living Lord. And 'faith' to St. Paul was simply listening to the living voice and following wherever it led, regardless of tradition. Christ and the soul's response to Christ—that for him was Christianity, and the whole of it.

It is not, I hope, presumptuous to say that to this conception of faith, and to the spiritual freedom that is born of it, it is the special duty of Free Churchmen to bear witness. While the great Roman and Anglican communions are with us it is not likely that we shall be suffered to grow unmindful of the past, of 'the faith' and our obligations to it. But, as someone has said, if our first duty to the past is to remember, our second duty is to forget ; and we of the Free Churches must teach men how wisely to forget, to turn from faith's dead yesterdays to the living present. Truth is not a static thing. Religion is something more than 'a final settlement with God.' Faith in Christ does not bind a man to creep timidly along familiar and well-charted shores, still less to lie idly rocking in a quiet harbour ; rather, as Lowell said of Emerson, it cuts the cable and gives us a chance at the dangers and glories of blue water. And this Free Churchmen, as long as they have been true to themselves, have always been quick to claim and to declare.

Many years ago, when the present writer was a candidate for the ministry of his Church, he included in the list of books which he had read a volume by the late Dr. Munger, of America, bearing the title which stands at the head of this chapter, *The Freedom of Faith*. When the eye of the minister who conducted the oral examination—a stern and unbending theologian of a bygone generation—lighted on the name, he flamed up at once: ‘There is no “freedom of faith,” he declared; ‘we are bound hand and foot to the teaching of the Lord Jesus.’ Yes, Christian men are bound to Christ, and they are not bound to anything else. But I can hardly think of language which more completely misconceives and misrepresents the relation of His followers to Him who said, ‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’

## II

### SIMPLIFYING THE CREED

*Old Memories* is the title of a golden little book of autobiography by the late Sir Henry Jones. Sir Henry was the successor of Edward Caird in the chair of moral philosophy in Glasgow University, and is well known as the author of a number of books on the philosophy of religion—including his recent Gifford Lectures, *A Faith that Inquires*—and to a still wider circle by his *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*. But it is probable that this

little volume will keep his memory alive, especially in Wales, the land of his birth, when his more ambitious works have been superseded and forgotten. It was written when death's loud knock on the door had already been heard and the writer knew that the inevitable hour was at hand ; and its story of a struggle for education against the most tremendous odds will hearten and inspire thousands of readers. It is, moreover, another reminder of the incalculable debt which our land owes to the homes of the godly poor, and to their little red-brick Bethels.

But my chief purpose just now in referring to this little book of 'Memories' is to call attention to what Jones tells us of the effect on his mind of the teaching of Edward Caird. He had been brought up, it will be remembered, in the strict and uncompromising theology of the Calvinistic Methodism of Wales, and the influence of his chapel-going days, as he gladly confessed, was with him to the end. But when he entered the moral philosophy classroom in Glasgow University old things quickly passed away, never to return : 'There was never any direct negative criticism of the traditional beliefs which we had, like others, accepted without examination or criticism. We were led, rather, to assume a new attitude of mind ; and articles of our creed simply became obsolete. . . . Before the end of the session miracles had lost their interest, and the legal and vindictive creed in which I had been nurtured had passed away like a cloud. I wanted to shorten the creed so that it should consist of one

article only : " I believe in a God who is omnipotent love, and I dedicate myself to His service." ' There are two things which I should like to say about this.

In the first place, is this shortened creed quite so simple as it looks ? ' I believe in a God who is omnipotent love ' ; well, that is only the first clause of the Apostles' Creed over again—' I believe in God the Father Almighty.' But the Church does not stop there, and it may be doubted if in the long run anyone can go as far as that who is not prepared to go a good deal farther. Bishop Gore has been saying lately that to his mind the only very difficult dogma of the Church is the dogma that God is love. And, half paradox as the saying may sound, there is real weight in his contention that the doctrine of the Divine love, so far from being the obvious thing that some people suppose, needs nothing less than the whole strength of the Church's faith in Christ to sustain it.

O wide-embracing, wondrous Love,  
We read Thee in the sky above ;  
We read Thee in the earth below,  
In seas that swell and streams that flow—

but do we, unless first we have learned to see that love in the face of Jesus Christ ? I need not again refer to the cruel facts of life that shriek against our creed, but it may well be asked if, in face of them, our faith in ' a God who is omnipotent love ' can keep its feet without that further fact of Christ to which it is the whole business of the Church to bear witness.

Nevertheless—and this is the second thing that I wished to say—I am with Sir Henry Jones, heart and soul, in his cry for a simplified and shortened creed. At whatever sacrifice of traditional beliefs which are not of the essence of our faith, we must get back past the formulas of men who were trying, as best they knew, to say what their faith meant to them and to their fellows, to the simplicities of the New Testament and to Christ Himself. We must rediscover for ourselves the vital and essential things which lie behind and beneath the Church's ancient creeds, and reaffirm them in our own way. Of course, this does not mean anything so unspeakably foolish as that Christian faith to-day has nothing to learn from the centuries that have gone before; it does mean that we must be as free to-day to define our faith as were the 'Fathers,' as free to call to our aid the thought-forms of our generation as were they to enlist those of theirs. In one of the letters in Bishop Moule's *Life*, to which reference is made in a later article (p. 142), there is a reference to the question of the lay administration of the Holy Communion in which the Bishop betrays an almost pathetic eagerness to justify the opinion he expresses by some quotation from Tertullian which he can only imperfectly recall. This is an attitude of mind, I confess, which I find it very difficult to appreciate. 'Who is Tertullian?' I begin to ask myself, 'and who are any of the Fathers that faith to-day should humbly seek a passport at their hands before setting out on any new quest of its own?' The fact is that in its many voyagings the Church has taken on board

so many cargoes of what is now mere unusable lumber that she is in danger of being loaded below the Plimsoll safety-line. A beginning has been made with the work of lightening the ship, but the natural timidity of so many, both of the ship's officers and of the crew, has made the process difficult and slow. And though, for my own part, I shall want to retain a good deal that Sir Henry Jones is apparently willing to let go, his words may at least remind us how urgently, and from every side, the Church to-day is called to the task of simplifying her faith.

## III

## EVANGELICAL MODERNISM

ONE of the speakers at a recent meeting of the Congregational Union—the Rev. Arthur Pringle—put in an earnest plea for preaching that is both modern and evangelical. We must steer clear, he said, of obscurantism on the one hand and of the surrender of the essentials of our faith on the other hand. ‘Why,’ he asked, ‘should not our preaching pay the fullest tribute to modern enlightenment and culture, and yet be suffused with a glad and passionate evangelicalism?’ A similar and still more significant appeal comes to us from America. Dr. B. W. Bacon, a well-known professor of Yale Divinity School, has just issued a lecture entitled *The Teaching Ministry for To-morrow*, in the course of which he has some



interesting things to say concerning the curious 'Fundamentalist' movement which at the present moment, like a prairie fire, is sweeping through many of the churches of America. The 'Fundamentalists' have set themselves to make an end of 'modernism' and all its works. One of the first to fall a victim to their fury is Dr. Fosdick, of all men, whose little books on prayer and Christ have been so widely read in this country and so often found a place in a soldier's kit during the late war. Dr. Bacon, it need hardly be said, is not on their side. He knows, as well as anybody, the utter futility of all their striving. Our modern Canutes may sit by the sea shore and say to the advancing tide, 'Thus far and no farther'; but nothing happens except that they get their feet wet. But Dr. Bacon is not content to point out the folly of 'Fundamentalism'; he turns to those on his own side. He reminds them that at the root of this blind, pathetic protest against modern knowledge is a real and serious concern for the gospel itself. Men to whom the Christian faith is dear as life itself, who owe to it all that they treasure most here and hope for hereafter, are not going lightly to surrender it at the bidding of a 'liberalism' whose cold negations chill them to the bone. The cut of their old garments may be badly out of date, but at least they keep them warm; and most sensible people would rather be comfortable in clothes that the fashion-books condemn than shiver in those that they approve. That is the temper, the just and reasonable temper, which we have to meet; how can we do it? We can do it only in one way; we

must meet it, as Dr. Bacon says, with ' a modernism that works.'

Modern our gospel and our preaching must be. There can be no going back in religion, any more than in science, to the abandoned beliefs of yesterday. It is in the world of to-day, whose thoughts, whose outlook, whose atmosphere are all ours, that we have to do our work. If our faith cannot adjust itself to things as they are, if it cannot speak to men in the only language which they can understand, it is dead and, like all dead things in a living world, it will speedily be trodden underfoot of men. But a modernism that merely denies, modernism without a gospel, is as powerless as the blindest obscurantism ; it must be an evangelical modernism, ' a modernism that works.' In other words, those of us who sympathize with liberalism in religion, who are convinced that modern scholarship is one of God's good gifts to His Church, must make it manifest that we have as sure a word of God to speak to men as our fathers had. And this is what we have often failed to do ; we have been too much concerned with what is false in the older views and too little with what is true in our own ; we have been more active in destroying old dwelling-houses which we think are no longer intellectually habitable than in providing new homes for the dispossessed tenants. And the inevitable result has been that we have left in men's minds a sense of loss that was not less real because it was sometimes vague and undefined. But preaching of that sort, it hardly needs to be said, has wholly missed the way. If a man can only speak so as to

leave men in the end consciously the poorer rather than the richer for his word, it were surely better that he should hold his peace altogether. But it need not and it ought not to be so. Dr. R. F. Horton has suggested one way in which Modernism may prove itself the true servant of the Christian Church. He says :

In recent months I have had an experience which tends to justify the view that the supposed loss is actual gain. I was asked to give a course of instruction showing what the Bible is, seen in the light of scholarship and the larger knowledge of our time. A very miscellaneous company assembled, of varied ages, varied education, and varied religious proclivities. I endeavoured to review the whole Bible literature, stating what was known of the dates, composition, and authorship of the several parts. I was not aware that I was telling them anything new, but the interest manifested was extraordinary. The class assembled whatever the weather, and it was quite clear that the members would do anything to avoid missing it. At the end of the session they all seemed to feel that they had, as it were, recovered the Bible. They had lost, perhaps, some of the traditional views in which they had been brought up, but the Bible they had found was no whit less valuable than the one they had inherited. It was even more interesting, because much which was obscure before had been made plain, and difficulties, moral, historical, theological, had vanished, as the true perspective had been attained and the elements of time and development had been taken into account.

That is an example of what I mean by ' a modernism that works.' At the moment there are multitudes in all our Churches who have lost faith in the Bible. They have picked up just enough of the new knowledge to discredit their old beliefs, and no more. It is for us, along the lines indicated by Dr. Horton, to restore their shaken confidence.

## IV

## A FAITH THAT WORKS

THREE recent books lie on the table before me as I write. At the first glance they seem to have nothing in common. One is the autobiography of a Japanese criminal who was hanged for murder; another is the story of a French missionary who lived and died for the natives of Africa, and now rests by the waters of the Zambesi; the third is the biography of a brilliant and successful Edinburgh lawyer. But for all their differences I bring them together because they all illustrate, each in its own way, the power of religion, and of a particular form of religion, on the lives and hearts of men. Those who are in quest of fresh examples of a faith that works cannot do better than read them. They are *A Gentleman in Prison*: the Story of Tokichi Ishii, written by himself in Tokyo Prison, and *François Coillard*, by Edward Shillito, and *Lord Guthrie, Memoir*, by Sheriff Orr. Let me say a word about each of them.

*A Gentleman in Prison* is a 'human document' of a very remarkable kind. It is the story, written in prison, of a Japanese criminal who was convicted, on his own confession, of murder, and afterwards hanged. Dr. John Kelman, who contributes a brief 'foreword,' speaks of it as 'one of the world's great stories. There is in it something of the glamour of *The Arabian Nights*, and something of the hellishness of Poe's *Tales of Mystery*. There is also the most realistic vision I have ever seen of Jesus Christ finding

one of the lost.' And even if one stops a little short of Dr. Kelman's generous enthusiasm, there need be nothing grudging in our estimate of the story he commends so highly. It has interest of various kinds, but mainly, of course, as a conversion document. Here, somewhat abridged, is the crucial record :

One day I got tired of sitting by myself with nothing to do, and just for the sake of putting in the time I took the New Testament down from the shelf and, with no intention of seriously looking into it, I glanced at the beginning and then at the middle. . . . I went on, and my attention was next taken by these words : ' And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' I stopped ; I was stabbed to the heart, as if pierced by a five-inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me ? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ ? Shall I call it His compassion ? I do not know what to call it. I only know that with an unspeakably grateful heart I believed. Through this simple sentence I was led into the whole of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

' I can assure my incredulous literary friends,' writes Mark Rutherford, ' that years ago it was not uncommon for men and women suddenly to awake to the fact that they had been sinners, and to determine that henceforth they would keep God's commandments by the help of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. What is more extraordinary is that they did keep God's commandments for the rest of their lives.' And this story of Tokichi Ishii is evidence, if evidence were needed, not only that such things happened ' years ago,' but that they still happen.

I take next Mr. Shillito's *François Coillard*—a model of missionary biography, the better not the

<sup>1</sup> For a further reference to this book, see p. 54.



worse for its brevity, and a really worthy addition to our noble library of Christian enterprise in the Dark Continent. Coillard was of Huguenot stock, trained in the strictest sect of French Protestantism, and one who 'kept at eve the faith of morn.' His beliefs about the Bible were, I suppose, shockingly out of date; he daily used the dialect of a school which is neither that of his biographer nor ours. Yet what are these things since, finally, as Browning says, he had 'a life to show'? His was a faith that worked, as his forty years and more among the Basuto and the Barotse plainly declare. Mr. Shillito's book helps us to realize how vast is humanity's debt to the missionary, and how pitiful might have been the lot of the African native if he had been left to the tender mercies of conscienceless company-promoters like Barney Barnato. And if anyone is tempted to think that Coillard's simple faith made of him a pious noodle, two facts may teach him to revise his judgement: (1) When he and his wife were on their long and weary journey across the African desert towards the Zambesi, they employed their leisure reading together Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*; and (2) if Cecil Rhodes had had his way, Frenchman as he was, Coillard would have been the first British Resident in Barotseland.

There remains the last and largest of my three books. Lord Guthrie was the son of the famous Dr. Thomas Guthrie, whose striking statue now adorns the Princes Street gardens in Edinburgh, and whose name is still a fragrant memory north of the Tweed. Charles John Guthrie, who was cast in his



father's noble mould, with the same great and gracious ways, was for many years a leading figure in the social and religious life of Edinburgh. There was something quite irresistible in his radiant charm, whether you met him in private life or heard him on the platform of a public meeting, and Sheriff Orr has made us all his debtors by setting before us anew his winning and vivid personality. 'My experience,' he once wrote, 'has been that the happiest people I have ever known, the people who seemed to get the most out of life in all its varied aspects, have been the most religious people, to whatever sect they belonged.' It was so with himself. He touched life at many points; he moved easily among the great and famous; travel, art, literature, music—he sought and loved them all. But in his closing days it was his thirty odd years of work in the Sunday school that gave him most pleasure in the retrospect; all through his quick and eager life he warmed both hands at the fire of his simple, evangelical faith.

Ishii, Coillard, Guthrie—so long as there are life-stories like these to be told, may we not still ask with the writer of *Ecce Homo*: Has Christ failed, or can Christianity die?

## V

### SOME EVANGELICAL SHORTCOMINGS

I DO not think that any regular reader of the newspaper column from which these short papers are taken will charge the writer with want of sympathy

with Evangelicalism. Again and again I have written in defence of its principles and in praise of its leaders. But it cannot be denied that Evangelicalism, like many other good causes, is sometimes wounded in the house of its friends. They wear its colours, they march under its banners, they make use of its passwords ; they are, moreover, devout and good men ; none the less they misrepresent it. They misrepresent it because they illustrate only its narrowness and not its breadth, only its limitations and not its freedom, and because on their lips its speech sounds in men's ears rather as a local patois than the mother tongue of the kingdom of God.

I have been led to say this—I hope I shall not pain anyone by the confession—through reading the *Life of Handley Carr Glyn Moule, Bishop of Durham*. Let me hasten to add, in justice both to myself and to the memory of one whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose, that there is much, and very much, in this biography to move all who read it to admiration and thankfulness. The beautiful home life in which young Handley was trained ; the noble band of brothers whom that training gave to the Church and to the world ; Moule's culture, his missionary zeal, his deep and genuine piety—all this might well move a reader who was not of his school of thought to cry, ' Almost thou persuadest me to be an Evangelical.' These things are here, and if I do not now dwell upon them it is because, writing as an Evangelical, it seems better to leave others to proclaim our virtues while we give ourselves to the

amendment of our defects. Three points are suggested if not exemplified, by Bishop Moule's *Life*.

I have spoken of Moule's 'deep and genuine piety,' and both adjectives were used advisedly. But occasionally—and this was the peril of the school to which he belonged—the piety had a flavour of the sorry, syrupy stuff that the world calls 'pietism.' In Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey's striking autobiography, he tells us that his father, though he had been brought up amongst Evangelicals and understood them and shared their better side, greatly disliked 'their way of living in their spiritual shirt-sleeves.' "'Shall we engage?" the evangelical pietist, whether clergyman or a layman, would say at the end of some buttered-toast-and-pound-cake tea-party, and then everyone would be expected to flop down on his knees and listen to an extemporary appeal to his Maker.' There is nothing in Bishop Moule's *Life* that jars like this, but his use of the dangerous adjective 'dear' illustrates what is in my mind. Can it be still necessary to say that while simple goodness always wins, pietism only repels? The spiritual food that is offered may be never so good, but if there be about it the least taint of unctuousness, healthy-minded young men and women will not touch it nor look at it. Evangelicals have always need to pray for the live coal from off the altar of reality to purge their lips of even the suspicion of cant.

Again, there are signs in this book of—I hardly know how to define it—a kind of intellectual crotchiness, a want of balance, a curious liking for the backwater rather than the main stream of

things, which again has been one of the snares of the Evangelical type of religion. I say nothing about Bishop Moule's attachment to the 'Keswick' school; but what is to be made of statements like these: 'He lived in the most triumphant expectation of our Lord's return, "an event which will prove as concrete and as historical as the Nativity or the Passion."' Ten years before the War he wrote to a correspondent: 'Surely the signs gather. Are we not on the verge of an almighty Armageddon at last?' General Allenby's entry into Jerusalem he interpreted as one of the 'signs many and profound that something supreme is coming before long.' And on one occasion, it is said, he spoke of 'the rapidly approaching end of the world' with such dramatic intensity that some of his audience became almost hysterical. It may be so; but there are some of us whom such speeches only move to feel for our hats and to look for the door. Will these confident prophets of 'the rapidly approaching end of the world' never take warning from the unfulfilled predictions with whose whitening bones all the past is strewn from the days of St. Paul till now?

Another of the defects of the Evangelicalism represented by Bishop Moule is its intellectual timidity. This is most clearly seen in this biography in Moule's attitude to the Bible. Beyond a very guarded and cautious admission that the first three chapters of Genesis must be interpreted 'with a certain reserve as to literalism,' and that in the public use of the Psalter it might be well to omit 'the most prominent passages of malediction, such as

those in Pss. 69 and 109 ' there is little to show that the Bishop had learned anything from those methods of Biblical study which during the last fifty years have modified so profoundly our interpretation and use of the sacred Scriptures. The truth is that the best representatives of Evangelicalism are to be looked for, not in Anglicanism, but—I hope there is no ugly ecclesiastical vanity in saying this—in the Free Churches, and especially in the United Free Church of Scotland. What may be the explanation of this I cannot now stay to inquire. Perhaps, as Dr. Dale once suggested, it is due in part to the relation of the older Free Churches to the great Puritan movement with its profounder learning and more sympathetic outlook over all the provinces of human thought, a relation to which Evangelicalism can, of course, lay no claim. But, however the fact be explained, a fact it remains that if we are seeking a living example of modern Evangelicalism at its best, we shall find it in men like R. W. Dale, the English Congregationalist, and James Denney, the Scottish Presbyterian, rather than in Handley Moule, the saintly Bishop of Durham.

## VI


### SWEETNESS OR SUGAR ?

SHORTLY after the middle of the last century a very angry controversy, known as ' The Rivulet Controversy,' broke out over the name of the

Rev. T. T. Lynch.<sup>1</sup> Lynch, who is remembered best to-day as the author of the well-known hymn, 'Gracious Spirit, dwell with me,' was a London Congregational minister who published in 1855 a little volume entitled *The Rivulet : a Contribution to Sacred Song*. Controversy was not in his thought, his main purpose being, according to Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, to provide his own congregation with something in the way of a supplement to Isaac Watts. But he had reckoned without the 'orthodox.' *The Rivulet* was so original 'that the folk who can only recognize truth in the doctrinal dress to which they have been accustomed called it heresy, and did their best to cast and keep it out of the synagogue.' The incident is well-nigh forgotten now, and I refer to it only in order to quote some lines which Lynch subsequently published in *Songs Controversial*, by 'Silent Long,' which will probably be new to most of my readers, as they were to me when I first came across them a few days ago :

When sugar in the lump I see  
 I know that it is there ;  
 Melt it, and then I soon suspect  
 A negative affair.  
 Where is the sugar, sir ? I say,  
 Let me both taste and see ;  
 Sweetness instead of sugar, sir,  
 You'll not palm off on me.

Don't tell me that the sugar-lumps  
 When dropt in water clear,  
 That they may make the water sweet )  
 Themselves must disappear ;

<sup>1</sup> See also p. 83. 



For common-sense, sir, such as mine  
The lumps themselves must see ;  
Sweetness instead of sugar, sir,  
You'll not palm off on me.

For instance, sir, in every hymn  
Sound doctrine you must state  
As clearly as a dead man's name  
Is on his coffin-plate.  
Religion, sir, is only fudge—  
Let's have theology ;  
Sweetness instead of sugar, sir,  
You'll not palm off on me.

Sorry doggerel, doubtless ; one does not go to *Songs Controversial* for poetry. None the less the lines may serve to point a useful moral. There are always those in the Church who prefer sugar to sweetness, who, indeed, will not believe in the sweetness unless they are shown the sugar. If they hear a man preach they cannot be sure that he is giving them sound doctrine unless it is flung at them in hard, visible, concrete lumps. They are always for having a man's signature to a creed, and when they have got it they are satisfied ; it is so much easier to read what a man signs with his pen than what he signs with his life. 'The faith'—that is something you can fight for, a well defined bit of territory, plainly marked off from the enemy's country, and laid down in the theological chart, but 'faith'—the thing of which the New Testament makes so much—who can define that, or put it into a chart, or tell exactly where it begins or where it ends ? As our little rhyme has it, when sugar in the lump we see we know that it is there, but

sweetness is for the palate to judge. Let me illustrate by a concrete case.

There is no sign that I can see that Christian men are giving, or are ever likely to give, to Jesus a place in their minds less than that which from the beginning has always been His, but there are many signs that some of the old formulæ through which that faith has found expression will not hold out much longer. And, indeed, this is just what we should expect and prepare ourselves for. As Dr. Denney has pointed out, in one of the noblest pleas for evangelical faith and freedom that have been given to this generation, there is one religion exhibited in every part of the New Testament; from beginning to end, in every writer represented in it, there is the same attitude of the soul to Christ. In other words, there is one faith. But though there is one faith there is not one Christology. That is to say, Christian thought was free at the beginning to find an answer to the questions which its own attitude inevitably raises about Jesus; and it must be free still. 'It was not,' says Denney, 'Christology in any sense in which Christians were one at the beginning, and the *Formula Concordiæ* which the perplexed conscience of multitudes in all the Churches is at present seeking cannot be a theological document. It must be a declaration which will bind men to Christ as believers have been bound from the beginning, but which will also leave them in possession of the birthright of New Testament Christians—the right and the power of applying their own minds, with conscientious freedom, to search out the truth of what Jesus is

and does.' If to men so bound we refuse this freedom, if in the name of something that we call 'historic Christianity' we insist upon the doctrinal propositions of the ancient creeds, are we not caring more for the sugar cubes of Nicæa or of Westminster than for the sweetness of Christian faith? This is not said in any spirit of disparagement of the ancient formulæ of our faith. Only a light-hearted fool would speak as if yesterday had nothing to teach us. But to no past, however long and sacred, may we surrender the right and duty of the present. The Church of the twentieth century is part of 'historic Christianity' equally with the Church of the fourth, and it can no more forget its debt to to-day and to-morrow than to yesterday.

Mr. Richard Watson Gilder, the American poet, puts these lines into the lips of a heathen sojourning in Galilee, A.D.32 :

If Jesus Christ is a man—  
And only a man—I say  
That of all mankind I cleave to Him,  
And to Him will I cleave alway.

If Jesus Christ is a God—  
And the only God—I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea, and the air.

When a man takes up that attitude to Jesus the theological doctrine of His person may be trusted sooner or later to come to its rights. The sweetness is there; anyone who cares may extract the creed crystals when he will.

## VII

## A LAYMAN'S CONFESSION OF FAITH

LORD CHARNWOOD is known to thousands of readers as the author of the best life of Abraham Lincoln which has yet been written by an Englishman. It is not, I think, unfair to Mr. John Drinkwater to say that his deservedly popular play is but a dramatized version of Lord Charnwood's book; it is from that ample quarry that his materials have been hewn. Now Lord Charnwood has given us a book of an entirely different character, the subject of which will come as a surprise to many readers—a book dealing with the Fourth Gospel: *According to St. John.* I am not going to review the book, and its main thesis—that for the purpose of learning more about the true figure of Jesus of Nazareth and the spirit of His teaching we may use the Fourth Gospel with confidence—I shall leave to the experts. I wish rather to call attention to its last chapter, the 'Epilogue,' as Lord Charnwood calls it, and to the remarkable confession of faith which it contains.

When I say 'confession of faith,' of course I do not mean one of the sharply defined, closely articulated type with which Church history has for so long made us familiar. The present day has no liking for confessions of that kind, nor does it seem in the least degree probable that the Church will ever again go back to them. We prefer to believe, as Dr. Denney once said, that the Gospel is able to

perpetuate its power in society and in individual souls without burdening anyone with such a complete intellectual outfit as the creedmakers of the seventeenth century laboured to provide. Lord Charnwood, at any rate, is not looking that way. He knows, and he does not try to ignore, the stern limitations of our knowledge; he knows how much easier it is to ask questions than to get real answers to them; he remembers what abysses of the unknown lie on every side of the little that is known. For example, though he declares himself 'a very ordinary Christian' in his beliefs, he confesses that he has never clearly understood the doctrine of the Atonement 'in the New Testament or in modern theologies.' With regard to the 'alleged miraculous occurrences' of which the Bible is full—that puzzle which seems to be appointed for Christians of our time—he holds that they 'are far less important than controversialists on either side make out.' But it is what a man affirms, not what he denies, that really matters, and, whatever Lord Charnwood's doubts or denials, he makes the right affirmations. Rather, I should say, he makes the right affirmation; in other words, he gives to Jesus His due. And now it is better to let Lord Charnwood speak for himself, the more so that he has weeded his words of the jargon of the schools and does not fear to strike the note of firm and definite personal conviction.

His studies have brought him, Lord Charnwood tells us in the introduction to his book, 'into a presence which to the normal mind is dear and

awful and strangely near'; and through that presence he has come to know God: 'It has ceased to be a matter of doubt with me that there is a living God, and, simultaneously with the passing of that doubt, I have come to believe that the nature of that living God was revealed to man in Jesus Christ.' It is to Him we owe our faith that God is love: 'Thoughts that fit in with it were abundant enough in prophets, sages, and philosophers before Him, but in its plenitude and its nakedness it took nothing less than the whole life and death of Christ to make it pass in the world as aught but sheer nonsense. To sum up: it grows upon many open minds as simple and certain fact that men have had so far but one Master, and that He revealed the one Gospel that they can ever have.' Not only so, but the way of life revealed in Jesus, so far from being a thing which has served its turn and will make way for some better system, is, Lord Charnwood believes, 'the least spent, perhaps the least ripened, of the great influences now perceptible in the world.' But if these things are so, certain obvious and immediate conclusions for the individual follow, and Lord Charnwood does not hesitate to draw them and to accept them. 'There are many people,' he says, 'who have long outgrown the disposition to humbug themselves, and are quietly at grips with practical life, but in whom the set desire to follow Jesus Christ has formed itself naturally and half-consciously.' Again, he says: 'Towards any great man, alive or dead, except our Lord, the attitude of discipleship is unreasonable and unmanly; towards our Lord,



as from a simple reading of the Gospels we all more or less conceive Him, some sort of unaffected discipleship appears, as we go on in life, the only reasonable or manly attitude.' The last words of the book are these: 'John believed that once, and once for all, the King had been seen upon this earth, and that his own hands had handled him. For myself, I believe with all my heart that John was right. Many men, much wiser than I, can only wonder about it, as well they may. But for him who wonders and for him who believes the same thing is primarily needful—that his own steps be guided within those shining bounds.'

When a great man makes his boast in the Lord, the humble hear it and are glad. And when a man like Lord Charnwood does not shrink from saying in the hearing of the whole world that 'discipleship is Christ's due and is worth while for ourselves,' every Christian man and woman who is striving to bear the same witness may well thank God and take courage.

## VIII

### SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH ON PURITANISM

I HAVE referred in a former paper to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's delightful second series of *Studies in Literature*. I propose to take my text from the same book again now. Sir Arthur, in his pleasantly

discursive way, makes one or two allusions to the Puritans. They are quite incidental and indeed parenthetical, but they are significant because they so evidently reveal the writer's deliberate attitude to Puritanism. Take this short paragraph for example : ' A Puritanical religion—that is, a religion which, hating art of all kinds that solace life and preluding with a fast, assures an infernal hereafter upon decent merry folk here who crave no future bliss if it involve a bigot's company—strikes first upon the theatre as inevitably as it will continue, if successful, to bludgeon anything and everything calculated to make glad the heart of man.'

Of course there is nothing new in this. Wholesale indictments of this kind have been brought against Puritanism a hundred times and have been answered as often. As long, however, as writers like Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch go on repeating the charge it is necessary to go on repeating the reply. Nobody, of course—certainly not the present writer—wants to make a thick-and-thin defence of the Puritans ; they had their faults—pretty obvious ones—like the rest of us. But when a man condemns them wholesale in the fashion of Sir Arthur, without one mitigating word, it is time to protest. There is truth in what he says about the Puritan religion, but when he puts it forward as the whole truth the facts fairly shout against him. And the simplest way of answering him is to set down a few of the facts on the other side.

I wonder if Sir Arthur ever read a book entitled *Lancashire : Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, by

Robert Halley, D.D. ? If he has he ought to know that the Puritans of Lancashire at least were far from being the gloomy, canting crew of his imagination. Many of them, says Dr. Halley, 'and even some of their preachers, were mighty hunters, keen anglers, fond of hawking, of shuffle-board, of bowls, of billiards, and, what may surprise their descendants, of baiting the badger, of throwing at the cock, and even occasionally of private theatricals.' In many wealthy Puritan families dancing was not disallowed, and Dr. Halley gives particulars to show how one Nicholas Assheton spent five days of Christmastide with his Puritan cousin, Sir Ralph Assheton, of Whalley Abbey, and what a merry time he seems to have had with his relatives. And what does Sir Arthur make of this: 'When, after the Act of Uniformity, several ejected ministers resided in Manchester they seem to have formed a sort of club for playing billiards and shuffle-board in a quiet public-house'? Does that look like 'bludgeoning anything and everything calculated to make glad the heart of man'? Sir Arthur may not know Dr. Halley, but he certainly knows the Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson, the young Puritan squire of Owthorpe, and how he loved music and painting and sculpture, and was fond of hawking, and prided himself on his skill in dancing and fencing. And he may have heard of William Guthrie, who was not only a Scottish Covenanter and the friend and correspondent of Samuel Rutherford, but—I quote Dr. Whyte's account of him—'the greatest humourist and the greatest sportsman in the Scottish Kirk of

his day ; he could gaff out a salmon in as few minutes as the deftest-handed gamekeeper in all the country, and he could stalk down a deer in as few hours as my lord himself, who did nothing else.' And even if Sir Arthur had forgotten or knew nothing of these things, there was one patent fact staring him in the face all the time he was writing which should have dried up the ink in his pen before he wrote that unhappy sentence on Puritan religion. For—will my readers believe it?—it occurs in a lecture on John Milton ! Milton who, as Sir Arthur himself says, ' loved good wine and the good converse that befits it,' who wrote of ' sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,' who asked,

What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones,  
The labour of an age in pilèd stones ?

who himself composed for the stage his immortal *Comus*, and of whose ' cheerful godliness ' his brother poet Wordsworth has written in immortal verse.

I am no apologist for all the words and works of Puritanism. I dislike its unlovely leanness of judgement as much as any man ; but if it is to be judged at all it ought to be by the best as well as by the worst whom it helped to make. And it is very much to be regretted that a man like Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, whose books we all delight to read, should have gone out of his way to repeat these musty slanders against a form of religion to which, with all its faults, England will be for ever debtor.

## IX

### THE ETHICAL EMPHASIS IN RELIGION

Two things picked up recently in the course of some rather desultory reading have suggested my topic. The first is from *Southey's Correspondence with Caroline Bowles*. The poet's correspondent, criticizing the religious education which was given in the schools of her day, says, 'The children get prizes for quick answers and clever distinctions between Melchizedek and Methuselah, while neither girl nor boy learns a single household duty—least of all the first and greatest, filial affection and respect.' The other is from a sermon by one of my favourite preachers: 'Which would shock you most,' he asked his congregation, 'to hear that some member of this church had become a Unitarian or a Roman Catholic, or to hear that he had been seen drunk, or that his books would not balance?' The truth common to these two quotations is the difficulty of getting religion construed ethically, the reluctance of religious people themselves to recognize the primacy of the moral. Man, as all his history shows, has always been in some sense 'religious'; but he has been strangely slow—as again all his history shows—to understand that religion means right-doing, and that without right-doing it is without worth and void.

Sometimes it is the ceremonial that gains precedence over the moral. That is one of the oldest and most obstinate of all the perversions of religion. The notion that the Deity asks only for sacrifices,

and that if these be abundant enough and costly enough his votaries are free to do as they will—against this the great Hebrew prophets struck with all the strength and passion of their being. Feasts, incense, oblations, it is not these things, they said, that God requires, but this: ‘To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.’ But the old falsehood dies hard, and there are probably few of us who do not know what it is to be tempted, in one way or another, to offset our moral shortcomings by our diligence and devotion in the service of the Church. Sometimes it is doctrinal soundness that is given the first place. When one sees where the emphasis falls in the New Testament it is rather disconcerting to remember how much more interested the Church has generally been in Christian dogmatics than in Christian ethics, in the Nicene Creed than the Sermon on the Mount. One glance at the literature of the two fields is sufficient to show that, as one glance at the Gospels is sufficient to show what Jesus put first. And sometimes it is a certain type of emotional experiences which is counted the principal thing. Indeed, as everyone knows, the peril of ‘revivalism’ has always been the thinness and poverty of its ethical life. John Wesley, the prince of revival preachers, was himself alive to the peril, and in characteristically robust fashion set himself to rouse others to it. ‘I find,’ he says ‘more profit in sermons on either good tempers or good works than in what are vulgarly called Gospel sermons. That term has now become a mere cant word; I wish none of our society would use it. It



has no determinate meaning. Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal that has neither sense nor grace bawl out something about Christ, or His blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, "What a fine Gospel sermon!" Surely the Methodists have not so learned Christ! We know no gospel without salvation from sin.'

I do not mean, of course, that this substitution for righteousness of ritualism, or orthodoxy, or emotionalism, or whatever it be, is done deliberately or consciously, but that the tendency, one way or another, is always there and always to be guarded against. And it is safe to say that a religion that does not guard against it has little chance with the sternly ethical temper of our time; it will be as the savourless salt, cast out and trodden underfoot of men. Judgement by consequences is the demand of our day, and all things, including religion, must submit to it. 'Show us,' men say in effect, 'the religion that pays the biggest ethical dividend, and we will put our money into it.' And why should we wish it otherwise? What better thing can a Christian ask for his faith than that it be given a chance to show what is in it to do? This is no hostile mood which we must somehow break, or bend to our will; it is ours already if we have but the wit to use it.

Moreover, the emphasis on the ethical may serve to restore to religion its most powerful witness. We remember with what unanswerable force the early Christian apologists threw down their challenge: 'Are not Christians better than heathens? Are

not our common people more virtuous than your philosophers? Is not conversion morally a change for the better?' And that appeal—the appeal of the good life—never fails. As Henry Drummond used to say, the evidence for Christianity is not the 'evidences'; the evidence for Christianity is a Christian. To see it in its true strength we must see it at work. Its proof is not logical but dynamical; it is demonstrated not by argument but by what it does. As long as it only argues, others will argue back again; when it gets to work it puts all its adversaries to silence. So that even though for the moment the doctrinal interest seems to be at zero there is no need to be anxious; the insistence on ethics will secure in the long run all the doctrine that is necessary. Among men who insist on the primacy of the moral, Christ must come, sooner or later, into His own; they will need Him even for their definition of righteousness, and still more for its victorious achievement.

## X

### THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

THE little Book of Joel is, I suppose, one of the least-known books in the whole of the Bible. Preachers rarely preach from it; Christian people rarely read it. But there are a few verses in it which are familiar to most of us because they are

quoted in the chapter in the Acts of the Apostles which is usually read in our churches on Whit Sunday : ' And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh,' &c. I refer to the passage now in order to call attention to Sir George Adam Smith's striking comment upon it. The land of Judah had been devastated by a plague of locusts. The prophet seized the opportunity to summon the people to repentance. Then to a nation penitent and submissive he promised, in the Divine name, the restoration of its material prosperity : ' I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten. . . . And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied. . . . And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh.' That is to say, in the order of the prophet's thought it is first that which is material, and then that which is spiritual. God's best and greatest gift is typified by the pouring out of His spirit upon all flesh ; but that gift—at least the full use and benefit of it—is conditioned by a certain degree of physical well being. ' When,' says Sir George, ' men are stunned by such a calamity as Joel describes, or when they are engrossed by the daily struggle with bitter enemies and a succession of bad seasons, they lack the leisure, the freedom, and the resources amid which their various faculties of mind and soul can alone respond to the Spirit's influence.'

Is there not in this a very pertinent word for the Churches to-day ? Is not a certain degree of physical well-being necessary to a revival of religion ? With what reason can we look for ' the fruits of the

Spirit ' among those whose daily portion is foulness and squalor and grinding poverty? What is the use—even General Booth was driven to ask himself—of preaching the Gospel to men whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad, desperate struggle to keep themselves alive? It was questions of this sort that Copec thrust upon its fifteen hundred delegates at Birmingham, and which they in their turn are now seeking to thrust upon the mind and conscience of the whole Church; for what Copec did for many of us was to bring home, as never before, the intimate and inseparable relation of the material and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, and the consequent responsibility of Christians, in the interest of those very things which they rightly put first, to work for the redemption of the whole social order.

Everyone knows what has commonly been our attitude in the past. We have been content for the most part to argue that if we would regenerate society we must regenerate the individual; that to secure public righteousness we must work for personal religion; that if the tree be good there will be no need to concern ourselves about its fruit. And of course this is true; nay, more, it is the most important part of the truth, and we can never insist upon it too often or too strongly. But it is not the whole truth, and the complaint which is urged against the Church—not surely without justice—is, not that it has said too much about its doctrine of individual salvation, but that it has said too little about other things that are needed to complete it.

It is simply not true to say, 'If the tree be good, the fruit will be good likewise,' for if you plant your good tree in a barren soil and a poisoned atmosphere there will be no fruit at all. And it is for these things—soil, atmosphere, environment—that we Christians have to learn a new and deeper concern. There is no use—and indeed there is no sense—in haggling about the relative importance of the good tree and the good soil, since neither will avail without the other. But one thing at a time; and at the moment I want to urge the Christian obligation to work for those better material conditions which, as the prophet reminds us, may prepare the way of the Divine Spirit in the lives of men.

The material and the spiritual *are* related, and to deal effectually with the individual it is necessary at the same time to deal with the whole social order in which he has his place. It is not enough for Christian philanthropy to pick up the victims as they fly broken from the wheel of oppression; we must stop the wheel itself. It is not enough, like the Good Samaritan, to minister to the poor wretch who lies stunned and bleeding by the wayside; we must police the road that leads from Jericho to Jerusalem and make it safe for all who travel. All honour to the devoted men and women who spend themselves in the rescue of those who have fallen victims to strong drink; yet what avails it so long as the public-house is permitted to manufacture general misery at every street corner? And behind that question stands another: how comes the public-house there? For the public-house is itself

not simply the cause of evil ; it is the effect of it. If I had been born and bred in an Ancoats slum, I think I might have welcomed the public-house as bringing a splash of colour, of brightness, and of warmth into the all-prevailing dirt and drab. And so you may go on, and at whatever point you strike in with your work of individual redemption you find yourself tugging at the whole clotted mass of misery and wrong.

What, then, must we do ? Abandon our work for the salvation of the individual ? In Heaven's name, no ! Without it we should soon be back again in Sodom and Gomorrah. But side by side with it, or rather as a part of it, we must work and think and plan and pray for the redemption of society.

## XI

### EVANGELICALISM AND SOCIAL REFORM

MR. AND MRS. HAMMOND'S *Lord Shaftesbury* has received in the press, both daily and weekly, the high commendation to which its combined brilliancy and thoroughness justly entitle it. It is a book to make one sad and proud in turn—sad that such legalized horrors as are here described could have been suffered by helpless women and children in Christian England less than a hundred years ago ; proud that an English peer should have given himself with such tireless zeal and such singleness of

see E. E. Haywood's "The Christian in Society" in  
 "The Social Reformers' Handbook" The Social  
 Reformers' Handbook

London: The Social Reformers' Handbook Co.  
 1897



purpose for their enfranchisement and redemption. Shaftesbury's life covered almost the whole of the last century—1801 to 1885—and the record of his efforts for the poor and the unprivileged is a large part of the history of social reform during that period. This is a subject upon which Mr. and Mrs. Hammond write with peculiar authority, and their sympathetic and illuminating study is sure to be widely read. I call attention to it here mainly because it raises a question which it is, of course, impossible to ignore in writing of a man like Shaftesbury—the relation, I mean, of Evangelical religion to social reform.

'I am,' Shaftesbury said once, 'essentially and from deep-rooted conviction, an Evangelical of the Evangelicals.' He owed for this nothing to his parents but everything to an old servant of the family, a strict Evangelical, of the name of Maria Millis: 'Shaftesbury's Simeon was Maria Millis.' His religion, it must be allowed, was of the narrow, hard-shell type. 'From youth to old age,' says his earlier biographer (Mr. Edwin Hodder) 'his theological opinions knew neither variableness nor shadow of turning.' 'About the government of the world,' say the Hammonds, 'the sanctions of conduct, the standards of truth and the sources of revelation he believed at eighty what he had believed at seven,' with this among many other unfortunate results, that 'his life was one long conflict with those who found more or found less than he found in the Bible.' Nevertheless, whatever its defects, and with them, his religion was the driving power of his long

*See Mr. Hodder's "Shaftesbury's Biography" p. 10-11  
 review of Hammond's "Age of the Evangelical Movement"*

and beneficent activities. It is easy to pick holes in his creed ; I could do it myself, Evangelical as I am, in a score of places. What is not easy, what indeed is not possible, is to deny that it was his creed that made and kept him a social reformer. And there is not, as it seems to me, adequate recognition of this in the Hammonds' book ; they make little attempt to link up Shaftesbury's religious faith, for which they have obviously little liking, with the social service to which it impelled him.

Nor, apart from Lord Shaftesbury, are our authors quite fair to Evangelicals as a body. They have, of course, no wish to belittle the greatness of his services to the common weal, but, they say, ' there was about his religion something that distinguished it from the religion of most of the people who shared his theological views.' They quote with approval a saying of Mr. Clutton-Brock that it was one of the misfortunes of the world that the Christian hope of the redemption of mankind came to be confused with private salvation ; and, apparently taking people like some of those described in Mark Rutherford's books and Mr. Gosse's *Father and Son* as typical Evangelicals, they go on to say that ' there was no body of religious opinion which had gone farther than the Evangelicals in giving a leading and guiding place to this error.' ' Evangelical though he was,' they say of Shaftesbury, he ' combined with all his intellectual narrowness the widest range of social pity.'

With all respect, I venture to say this is all wrong. It might be said, and said with justice, of some who

have borne the Evangelical name ; but as a judgement upon the whole Evangelical movement it simply cannot stand. The confusion of the redemption of mankind with private salvation—is this a charge to be brought against the men who founded the great missionary societies, who freed the slave and cleansed the foulness of our English prisons ? The members of the ‘ Clapham Sect,’ Wilberforce, Stephen, Macaulay, Granville Sharp, the Thorntons, and the rest, all Evangelicals to a man—had they not, too, ‘ the widest range of social pity ’ ? One of the noblest results of the religious revival of the eighteenth century, says John Richard Green in an oft-quoted page of his *Short History*, was ‘ the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this, to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering, the social degradation of the profligate and the poor. It was not till the Wesleyan impulse had done its work that this philanthropic impulse began.’ And if Green’s testimony seems now a trifle musty, let me add a word from Mr. G. M. Trevelyan’s latest work. Mr. Trevelyan, I need hardly say, writes with no bias towards Evangelicalism, of the defects of which he speaks quite frankly ; nevertheless, he says—writing of the days which followed Pitt—‘ Evangelicalism brought rectitude, unselfishness, and humanity into high places, and into the appeal to public opinion. . . . The strongest type of English gentleman in the new era, whether Whig or Tory, was often Evangelical. The army knew them with respect, and India with fear and gratitude. Their influence on Downing Street

and in the permanent Civil Service, through families like the Stephens, gravely affected our colonial policy on behalf of the natives of Africa and the tropics, sometimes with little wisdom, but oftenest and on the whole for the great good of mankind.' If Mr. and Mrs. Hammond would recast this page of their story they might remove what seems to one reader the only blot on a most admirable and instructive narrative.<sup>1</sup>

## XII

### THE CHURCH AND SPIRITUALISM

I HAVE received from the Publication Department of the Congregational Union a reprint of two volumes bearing the name of C. Silvester Horne—*A Popular History of the Free Churches* and *The Romance of Preaching*. It is impossible to take up these books without a stab of regret for the memory of one so early lost to us. Silvester Horne was only forty-nine when, twelve years ago, death's swift call came to him on the deck of an Ontario steamer. On how many a field of battle since have we missed his knightly, radiant spirit! Nevertheless, it is well that these books, which have long been out of print, should once more be available, and especially his

<sup>1</sup> It seems only fair to add that Mr. Hammond has acknowledged privately the justice of this criticism, and in the second edition of his book has re-written the passage against which it was directed.

*History of the Free Churches*, which in its new form makes a handsome, well-printed volume of nearly five hundred pages and costs but a crown. It was first published in 1903, and in order to bring it up to date a new chapter has been added by Dr. Albert Peel, the editor of the *Congregational Quarterly*, summarizing the history of the Free Churches during the last quarter of the century. A sentence or two from this new chapter is the occasion of the present brief discourse. Speaking of 'the emergence or recrudescence of many forms of thought that have their main expression outside the Churches,' Dr. Peel says :

The tremendous loss of life caused by the war turned the minds of many people toward Spiritualism. While some of the most acute minds in the country have been investigating psychic phenomena for a generation, there have not been wanting charlatans ready to take advantage of the sorrows and superstitions of ignorant and deluded people. . . . Most Nonconformists have an open mind on the subject, not venturing to assert that communication with the departed is impossible, but holding that the verdict for the present must be 'Not proven.'

I hope Dr. Peel is right when he says that 'most Nonconformists have an open mind on the subject.' I seem to have met some who were ready to brush the whole business aside with a contemptuous 'Pshaw!' and even to silence anyone who dared to suggest that there might be something in it. But I am sure that his words indicate what ought to be our attitude. Undoubtedly, there are 'charlatans' who are ready to prey upon the 'ignorant and deluded'; let them be exposed and suppressed

without mercy and without delay. But it is worse than ridiculous to use such language where men like Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle are concerned. They are not charlatans, but honest and earnest inquirers ; if they are wrong there is no need to anathematize them ; it will be enough to show that they are wrong. Meanwhile the rest of us will do well to keep an open mind. For myself, I have no smallest shred of experience by which to confirm the conclusions of the Spiritualists, but if God has anything to teach us by them—I am not yet sure that He has—I want to learn it. And I should like to believe, with Dr. Peel, that most of my fellow Free Churchmen are of the same way of thinking. But if there are those who still think that this is a case for a court of summary jurisdiction rather than for the patient hearing and weighing of evidence, I will ask them to consider two facts of a kind which, while they may not bring conviction, do at least cause some of us to pause.

The first I take from Dr. W. L. Walker's *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*. Dr. Walker is now a retired Scottish Congregational minister whose scholarly theological writings have made him known to a wide circle of readers. In the volume referred to he has a chapter entitled 'The Possibility of Survival,' and at the end of it this brief note is added :

It is hoped that it is not out of place to state here that, shortly after the MS. of this book was sent to the publishers the writer had the misfortune unexpectedly to lose a devoted wife. She was deeply interested in this subject, and before she passed away the writer promised to cherish



her spiritual presence, and asked her (if it was right and not hurtful) to try to manifest her presence to him. He feels bound to say that he believes that she has done so.

For my second illustration I turn to the very remarkable life-story of F. W. H. Myers, the author of the well-known religious poem *St. Paul*, and of other writings both in prose and verse. In Myers's early years he was profoundly influenced by that noble woman, Mrs. Josephine Butler. 'She introduced me,' Myers says, 'to Christianity, so to say, by an inner door ; not to its encumbering forms and dogmas, but to its heart of fire.' Under that influence he wrote his two poems *St. Paul* and *St. John the Baptist*, the former of which still bears on the dedicatory page Mrs. Butler's initials. Then came disillusion, as it came to so many in the days of Myers's youth, when the tide of materialism was at the flood. Insensibly, he says, the celestial vision faded and left him to 'pale despair and cold tranquillity.' Later, however, he fought his way back again, not indeed to the full faith of a Christian, but at least to a confident and rejoicing hope of immortality. I have only space for one quotation. Writing to a friend in 1900 Myers said :

My researches have at any rate made *me* very happy, and I want to make as many other people follow the same line of happiness as I can ; though we are all booked for such a good thing in the *next* world that it matters comparatively little how we fare in *this*. . . . When after death *you* enter on the endless and unimaginable happiness which I confidently anticipate for you you must give me the pleasure of coming up to me and saying, 'Well, you told me of this when I hardly ventured to believe it !'

And, incredible as it will seem to some, Myers reached this happy confidence along the line of psychical research. At first, he says, he had great repugnance to studying the phenomena alleged by Spiritualists ; it seemed like trying to re-enter by the scullery window the heavenly mansion out of which he had been kicked through the front door. But he persevered, and the end was what we see.

Again let me say I do not mention these things as if they proved the truth of the Spiritualist's hypothesis ; it may be that the facts upon which he builds admit of some other and different explanation ; but at least let us not be in haste to condemn lest, like others before us, we be found fighting against God.

IV

‘SUNSET AND EVENING STAR’



# I

## THE BACKWATER OF LIFE

My subject has been determined for me by what people with a Johnsonian turn of mind might call a concatenation of circumstances. First, I happened to read that lovely page of Old Testament story which tells how Barzillai the Gileadite made answer to David, when the latter was returning to Jerusalem, after the revolt of Absalom, and would have taken the old man with him :

Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king with sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man. And the King said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will sustain thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the king, How many are the days of the years of my life, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old: can I discern between good and bad? [*i.e.* as Moffatt renders it, have I a taste for pleasures?] Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Thy servant would but just go over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, by the grave of my father and my mother.

2 Sam. 17<sup>21</sup>-39  
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The words fall on one's ear like a strain of lofty music, but even the music cannot hide the note of sadness that is in them. Then I turned to James Payn's pathetic little essay, the title of which I have put at the head of this paper—*The Backwater of Life*. The keynote is struck in its opening sentences : ' It is a strange feeling to one who has been immersed in affairs, and as it were in the mid-stream of what we call life, to find oneself in its backwater, crippled and helpless, but still able to see through the osiers on the island between us what is passing along the river—the passenger vessels and the pleasure boats—and to hear faintly the voices and the laughter, and the strong language mellowed by distance, from the slow-moving barges.' Finally there came to me a letter which has deeply touched me. It is written by one of the most brilliant men whom it has been my privilege to know, but who now for some years has been a hopeless invalid. I wish I were free to print the letter entire, with the writer's name attached, but I will give the closing paragraph, confident that if this page should chance to meet his eye he will forgive the liberty I am taking : ' My long illness,' he says, ' has many alleviations. Though I am very weak, I have no severe pain. My mental faculties are still in good working order, I continue my studies and can read for hours a day. Indeed I have read more during the last four years than in any four years of my life. My eighty-third birthday is due next month. Whether I shall live to see it is as God wills. " And so beside the silent sea I wait the muffled oar." '



It is certainly not for us who are still in mid-stream to lecture those who have reached the backwater ; but neither ought we to forget them, and ministers who are always preaching to the young would do well sometimes to spare a thought and a word for those whose work is done and who sit with empty, folded hands, waiting for the end. As my friend says, the backwater is not without its ' alleviations.' For one thing it is not—at least it need not be—so wholly the place of inaction we sometimes think it. ' Old age,' as Tennyson's Ulysses says, ' hath yet his honour and his toil ' :

Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we are ;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

A Harley Street doctor has recently been telling us that if we will observe a few simple, common-sense rules of health there is no reason why the years from sixty to ninety should not be among the best years of our life. And besides the shining examples which are known of all—like Gladstone and General Booth and John Clifford—most of us can point to men and women in our own circle whose years of ' retirement ' are still years of fruitful and of gracious service.

What alleviations, too, there are for those in the backwater in the goodness of friends ! Even Mr. Payn, who rejects all other proffered anodynes,

accepts this with gratitude: 'There is one—one—consolation in our miserable lot, that it has brought us face to face with the immeasurable goodness of Humanity. If even there be no heaven hereafter, there are angels here.' The letter from which I have already quoted strikes the same note: 'I am often touched and humbled by the far too kind view that old friends have taken of what I have been and of what I have done during the years of my active life. "The gratitude of man has often left me mourning."' And there are the alleviations of faith. As someone pointed out when Payn's essay first appeared, his backwater of life is Bunyan's land of Beulah: 'In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was out of the reach of Giant Despair, neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Here they had no want of corn and wine; for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimage. As they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound.' Waller himself was on the verge of Barzillai's fourscore years when he wrote:

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,  
Lets in new light thro' chinks that time has made:  
Stronger by weakness, wiser, men become,  
As they draw near to their eternal home.  
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,  
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

*"...Dr. Johnson's immortal address to  
Lord Chesterfield. He quoted exactly  
all time" — Earl of Birmensham.*

## II

### 'HAD IT BEEN EARLY, IT HAD BEEN KIND'

No lover of Dr. Johnson will need to be told whence I have borrowed my title. It is taken from his famous letter to Lord Chesterfield. Chesterfield, who had for long ignored Johnson, was now anxious to appear—so, at least, and with reason, Johnson believed—as the patron of the author of the great dictionary. Johnson would have none of him :

Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached the ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

'Had it been early, it had been kind' : it is a phrase to haunt the memory and provoke reflection in the last days of the dying year. It speaks of missed opportunities, of things done and left undone which now we vainly wish were otherwise, of all the neglected good of life for which now it is too late to seek to make amends. It is the same thought that has so often sharpened for us the sting of death. 'O the anguish of that thought,' George Eliot writes 'that we can never atone to our dead for the stinted affection we gave them, for the light answers we returned to their complaints or their pleadings, for the

little reverence we showed to that sacred human soul that lived so close to us and was the divinest thing God had given us to know ! ' Who does not remember Carlyle's fierce self-upbraidings when his wife was suddenly snatched from his side ; ' Old scenes came mercilessly back to him in vistas of mournful memory. In his long, sleepless nights he recognized too late what she had felt and suffered under his childish irritabilities. His faults rose up in remorseless judgement, and as he had thought too little of them before, so now he exaggerated them to himself in his helpless repentance. " Oh ! " he cried, again and again, " if I could but see her once more, were it but for five minutes, to let her know that I had always loved her through all that." ' And here is another kindred word from the autobiography of a man of letters, just fresh from the press : ' I know now that I must have often appeared, to those who loved me best, indifferent to many of the things that interested them. Perhaps I had been both happier and wiser had I oftener played halma with my little daughter, and I would now, when it is too late, gladly exchange all the books that I have written for one grateful glance from those clear eyes which I shall see no more on earth.' It is all very old, as old as sorrow and life and death. But what power these old poignant commonplaces have to wring and pierce the heart ! Had it been early, it had been kind, but now—— !

It is easy when the year is going to let feelings like these work their will upon us, sometimes almost to our own undoing. But a luxurious self-pity is the

idlest of follies. All our regrets, however bitter and sincere they may be, have no power upon our yesterdays, and except we can make of them the teachers and monitors of our to-morrows it were better straightway to stifle and forget them. But we can turn them to account ; through the memories that to-day make us wince and smart we may learn in the coming days a new considerateness for those who are about us. A shrewd critic has suggested that the troubles of the Carlyle household, of which the world has heard so much, were due in no small part to the fact that Carlyle himself had never learned to find speech for the feelings that lay nearest to his heart. And do not some of our own less vocal troubles spring from the same source ? There is a pretty story told of Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, how that once when travelling in Australia he happened to say in public that he thought that English people needed to be reminded of the duty of letting those whom they love know of their affection : ' Love me, and tell me so.' The report of the saying reached Birmingham before the Doctor, and when, on his return some months later, a welcome meeting was arranged for him, the first thing that met his eye when he entered the hall in which the meeting was held was a motto in large letters which ran along the front of the gallery facing the platform : ' We love you, and we tell you so.' Might not life for some tired and discouraged souls be a gladder and a sweeter thing if henceforth more of us resolved to walk by the same rule ?

As I am writing some words come back to me

which I read, long ago in Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*, and with them I may fitly close this brief Old Year's homily : ' Weave thy chaplet of flowers, and strew the beauties of Nature about the grave ; console thy broken spirit, if thou canst, with these tender yet futile tributes of regret ; but take warning by the bitterness of this thy contrite affliction over the dead, and henceforth be more faithful and affectionate in the discharge of thy duties to the living.'

### III

#### ' SIXPENNYWORTH OF MIRACLE '

It is the last day of the year, and it is not easy for a preacher to avoid the moralizing mood. Perhaps on this day at least the mood may have its way. Preacher-like, then, I will begin with a text which I take from one of my favourite books, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, by George Gissing :

Near a hamlet, in a lonely spot by a woodside, I came upon a little lad of perhaps ten years old, who, his head hidden in his arms against a tree trunk, was crying bitterly. I asked him what was the matter, and learnt that, having been sent with sixpence to pay a debt, he had lost the money. The loss was a very serious one, and he knew it ; he was less afraid to face his parents than overcome by misery at the thought of the harm he had done them. Sixpence dropped by the wayside, and a whole family made wretched ! What are the due descriptive terms for a state of ' civilization ' in



which such a thing as this is possible? I put my hand into my pocket, and wrought sixpennyworth of miracle.

And if this seem rather long a text for so short a sermon, we may sum it up in a word of New Year counsel once given by ‘Ian Maclaren’: ‘Be pitiful, for every man is fighting a hard battle.’

‘Be pitiful.’ For many of our fellows the New Year may turn out to be a very hard year. It is but little, perhaps, that we can do for them; but even that little will be left undone if we suffer the fount of pity to be dried up. ‘To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with thy God’—to Huxley that seemed the perfect ideal of religion. But there are some who, though no man may charge them with doing unjustly, have never learned to love mercy; they are hard and unpitying; as Carlyle used to say they have ‘no bowels.’ And though pity alone will not redeem the world, it can never be redeemed without it. Therefore, amid all rebuffs and disappointments, let us strive to keep within us a tender heart, and to whatever Church we belong—High Church, Low Church, Broad Church—let us keep out of the Hard Church, ‘the Church that has lost its soul, that has no care for the outcast, no pity for the poor.’ Is there any lovelier story told of any English man of letters than that of Dr. Johnson putting pennies into the shut hands of little children whom he found sleeping at night in doorways in the Strand, that when they woke they might think some angel of mercy had visited them? So small is the price at which our best things are bought—miracles for sixpence!

'Be pitiful'; for only through our human pity can anyone understand or believe in the Divine pity. 'God's possible,' says Mrs. Browning, 'is taught by His world's loving,' and then, with the thought in her mind of the cruel wrongs once suffered by helpless little children in English mines and factories, she adds, 'and the children doubt of each.' How can you believe in the Divine pity when there is no human pity near through which it can be interpreted and made real? It is easy to say 'God is love,' but the saying, great as it is, means nothing, and is nothing until 'love' itself is filled with meaning. The tale of the Divine pity, someone has truly said, was never yet received from lips that were not felt to be moved by human pity.

'Be pitiful'—how many voices there are, both of yesterday and to-day, to take up and repeat the word of exhortation! It is good to know that of late thousands of readers have been led back to study afresh the life of 'sweet St. Francis of Assisi.' There could hardly be a better solvent of the harsh and bitter acids of the human system. 'He was a man,' says one of his biographers, 'overflowing with sympathy for man and beast, for God's creatures, wherever and howsoever he encountered them. Not only was every man his brother, but every animal—the sheep in the fields, the birds in the branches, the brother ass on which he rode, the sister-bees who took refuge in his kind protection. He was the friend of everything that suffered or rejoiced; no emotion went beyond his sympathy; his heart rose to see the gladness of Nature, and

melted over the distresses of the smallest and meanest creature on the face of the earth.’

Or read Matthew Arnold’s *St. Brandan*. Once a year, on Christmas Eve—so ran the ancient legend—the traitor Judas, for some chance kindness shown a Joppa leper, was released from hell and suffered for one brief hour to ‘stanch with ice’ his ‘burning breast’:

Oh, Brandan, think what grace divine,  
What blessing must full goodness shower,  
When fragment of it small, like mine,  
Hath such inestimable power!

That germ of kindness, in the womb  
Of mercy caught, did not expire,  
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,  
And friends me in the pit of fire.

And, if it be needed, there is older, higher sanction still: ‘Let all bitterness be put away from you; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.’ So will pity work again its ancient miracle of healing and repair.

#### IV

#### ‘IN SOMEBODY’S HAND’

WHEN the end of the year is in sight it seems natural to let that fact guide one’s pen. There may be those who smile at the seriousness with which some of us

are wont to watch the passing of the old year and the coming of the new. Our divisions of time, they may tell us, are simply convenient human contrivances, that there is nothing really corresponding to what we speak of as the turning of a new corner or the opening of a new chapter in our life ; that, indeed, the whole business is only one of those foolish imaginings with which we are wont to deceive our foolish selves. Be it so ; yet even the least imaginative among us may be thankful for those rare moments in our noisy lives—like the death of the old year or the two minutes' silence on Armistice Day—which, as Dorothy Wordsworth said of Grasmere, ' call home the heart to quietness.' So that if again I slip into the moralizing mood my words will not, I hope, seem on that account forced and unreal.

I am going for the text of my little homily to a page in Thomas Hardy's powerful story *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. No one who has read it can well forget the scene in which Michael Henchard was plucked back from the pool he was intending to make his deathbed by the sight of his own effigy lying stiff and stark upon the surface of the stream. ' Who is such a reprobate as I,' his daughter afterwards heard him say, ' and yet it seems that even I be in Somebody's hand ! '

' Even I be in Somebody's hand ' ; it is remarkable how deep and strong that feeling often is even in those who are not—at least in our conventional sense—ardently religious. They are conscious—they hardly know of what ; something is at work within them which yet is not themselves ; a power

not their own seems to have taken life out of their hands and to be ordering it for them. I am stating the facts in very clumsy and inadequate fashion, but there is no doubt about the reality of them. Let me stand aside for a moment that others who have had the experience may speak of it for themselves. Everyone remembers Matthew Arnold’s phrase about ‘the Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness.’ Tennyson once formulated his own religious creed in these words—spoken with such a calm emphasis that one who heard him wrote them down, with the date, exactly and at once: ‘There’s a something that watches over us; and our individuality endures: that’s my faith, and that’s all my faith.’ Robert Louis Stevenson, speaking of a great change in his life—a change which turned him ‘from one whose business was to shirk into one whose business was to strive and persevere’—said concerning it: ‘It seems as though all that had been done by someone else. I was never conscious of a struggle, nor registered a vow, nor seemingly had anything personal to do with the matter. I came about like a well-handled ship. There stood at the wheel that unknown steersman whom we call God.’ In no man of our own day, perhaps, has that sense of being in the hands of Another been so strong and steadfast as in General Gordon. This was his favourite text:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,  
And lean not upon thine own understanding:  
In all thy ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct thy paths;

and this his favourite quotation from Browning :

I see my way as birds their trackless way.  
I shall arrive ! What time, what circuit first,  
I ask not ; but unless God sends His hail,  
Or blinding fireballs, sleet, or stifling snow,  
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive ;  
He guides me and the bird.

Two other examples of a slightly different kind may be added. The first I take from Mr. F. A. Atkins's pleasant little volume, *The Durable Satisfactions of Life*. ' I remember,' he says, ' lunching in a London club one Sunday with a well-known minister who was in sad trouble, very unwell, and thoroughly tired ; and yet that morning he had preached one of the most searching and inspiring sermons I had ever heard. I laughingly remarked that he always preached best when things were at their worst. He looked at me and said very quietly, " We get help." ' The other is a little memory of my own. Many years ago, in the great Convocation Hall of the Toronto University, I listened to a man who had just been appointed to the presidency of the university. At that time he was almost an unknown man ; to-day he is one of the most honoured citizens of the whole Dominion. He closed his inaugural address by saying very simply that he took up his new work believing that when a man tried to do his duty help came to him from the unseen.

That is the simple, reassuring word which I would fain pass on to the friends, known and unknown, into whose hands it may fall. It is a good word on



which to end the old year and begin the new. We are not orphans in a cold world, unshepherded and uncared for—

Poor windlestraws,  
On the great, sullen, roaring pool of Time  
And Chance and Change—

we are in the hands of God. It will bring quiet courage to the fearful and hope to those who are losing heart, if in these last hours of the old and dying year we can learn to say, 'Even I be in Somebody's hand!'

"The best is yet to be"

The last of life for which the just receive  
(R. Ben Ezra)

Add:

O my friends are in His hand who saith  
A whole I planned, youth shows but he  
Trust God, all, not be afraid"

R. B.: "Rabbi Ben Ezra."





